■ Elan / C1
Marivic Rufino, the maverick-artist and modern sage

■ News / A2
Jamby sues Mike for P100M even after 'mea culpa' statement

■ Saturday Special / A3-1
Boots Anson Roa: From 16 to 60 and life's lessons in between

■ Science / B4
Nurses urged to bring back passion in profession

Tanon

RP med ba sa go
CELLCARD K
CELLPHONE

Officer behind 'bogus' raid to get real medal

PALITAN NG PEKENG MEDAL!

By Christian V. Esguerra

HE LED his unit to a bogus raid, arrested 17 Muslims suspected of being terrorists, freed 15 of them for lack of evidence, and he's getting a medal?

OFFICER/ A21

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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Saturday, January 29, 2005 ★★ 80 pages / 11 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 52 P18

"CARIN
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Anti-VAT groups take to the streets

Erap allies, party-list solons to join mass actions

By TJ Burgonio and Christine O. Avendaño

EDWIN BACASMAS

DOUBLE the smiles as the peso hovers near P54 to $1 and the influx of investments perk up stocks to five-year highs. President Arroyo's happy mood is reflected on her vehicle's window as she greets residents of Brgy. Putatan, Muntinlupa City.

AFTER losing the House vote on the measure seeking an increased value-added tax, opposition lawmakers will take to the streets in an effort to raise the awareness and gain the support of the public.

The lawmakers allied with ousted President Joseph Estrada, who are closing ranks with party-list representatives in opposing the VAT increase from 10 to 12 percent, are also likely to join the protest actions planned by militant groups.

"Expect mass actions and statements in the days to come," said House Minority Leader Francis Escudero.

But he was quick to deny that a fresh attempt to topple President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration was afoot.

"We're not trigger-happy. We don't spend our mornings just looking for that spark, so to speak. Nobody wants to sow chaos, and we admit we're not capable of planning, and we're not planning, to topple the government," Escudero said yesterday at a press forum.

"We have seen that happen in 1986 and in 2001. These can't be planned by just a few; they just happen naturally," he said, referring to the bloodless revolts that ousted the Marcos and Estrada regimes.

Escudero said the opposition was also planning a "people's congress" to discuss the net effects of the VAT increase measure.

"Since their voice wasn't heard by Congress on this issue, we will give our people ample opportunity to air their concerns and opinions about the VAT bill," he said.

Escudero pointed out that the urban poor was not represented at the congressional hearings on the measure.

"Given the public outcry right now, hopefully we'll have more numbers. I don't know if it will be enough to overcome [the approval]," he said.

He went on to say that the bill required thorough study.

He added: "Chances are, it's not the rich, who have money to place pro-VAT ads in the papers, but the poor who will

ANTI-VAT/ A22

SEC to CAP: S money first t

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez, Christine O. Avendaño and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

SHOW us the money and then we'll talk.

Despite efforts by the College Assurance Plan (CAP) to comply with the requirements of the Securities and Ex-

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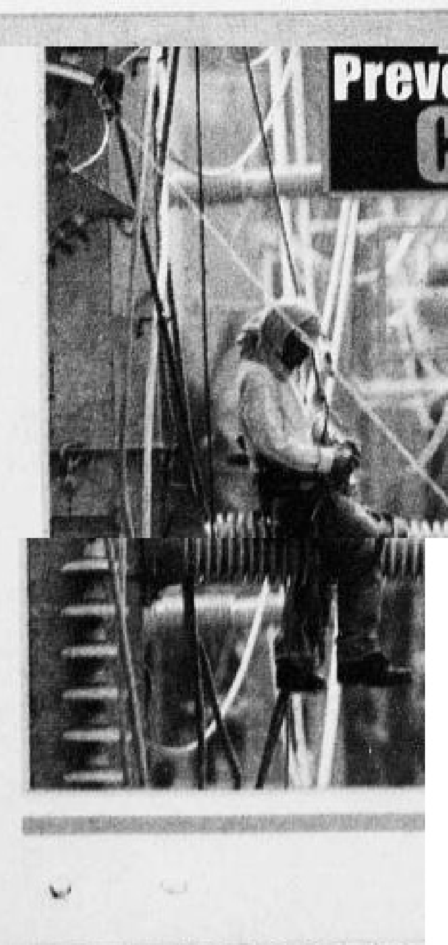

g ng Bayan / A27

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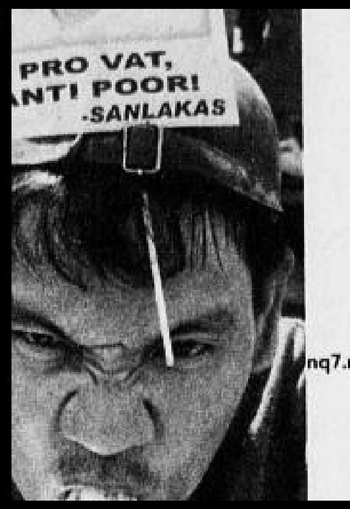

PRO VAT, ANTI POOR! -SANLAKAS

nq7.net

NDERIA" economics as espoused Palace is denounced by militant like Sanlakas who hold a luncheon sting on noodles at the Welcome a in Quezon City. ERIK ARAZAS

so nears 4 to $1; ocks soar

is C. Dumlao

ESO surged further against the US yesterday, rallying to as high as before closing at a 14-month high of on strong foreign inflows, currency said.

gko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Buenaventura said the Philippine cy could extend its gains if the govt pressed its fiscal reform efforts.

ere's no reason why the peso will not e to P54 or even better," Buenavenid.

erday's finish at the Philippine Deal-

stem was the strongest close since 2003. Value turnover at the foreign ge market was still robust at million, up from $326.8 million on ay.

ng inflows continued to pour into untry, boosting dollar supply and pporting the peso's unabated rally the aftermath of a sovereign credit downgrade by Standard & Poor's.

ed on BSP data, about $320.3 million orth of gross outflows had gone to al stock market since the start of the

PESO/ A8

Show us your to get license

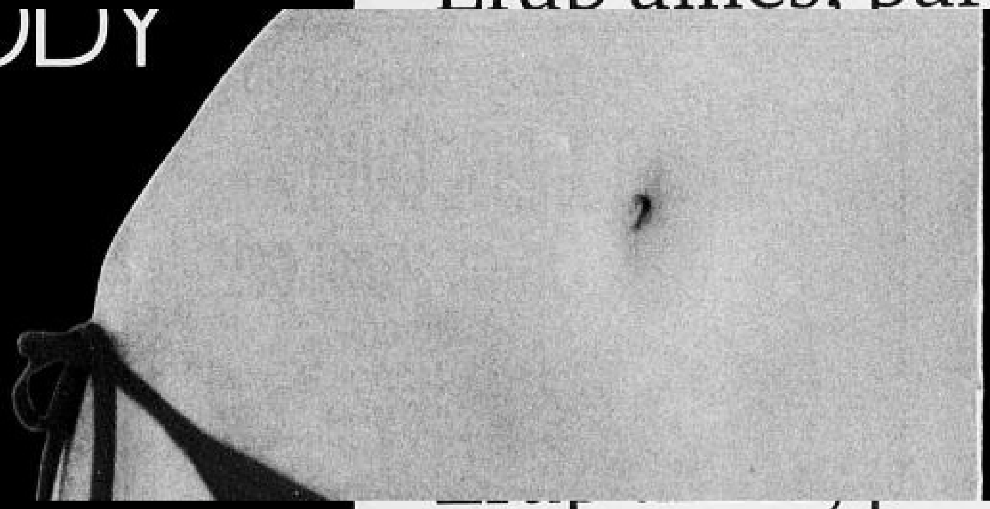
regulatory body remains hesitant to renew CAP's license to sell education plans in the absence of fresh capital infusion into the beleaguered pre-need firm.

SEC chair Fe Barin yesterday said the SEC is not yet convinced to allow CAP to sell new education plans.

"Until now I cannot see any basis for

SEC/ A8

change Commission (SEC), the state



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'Pinoys make do with less'

By Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THE YEAR 2004 was the dumps if the Social Weather Stations (SWS) surveys were to be the bases for assessment.

The past year wasn't a good year at all for both Filipinos and their leaders, but somehow, Filipinos made do with having less. And while the "holiday spirit" at the end of the year was "somewhat dampened," it was "far from extinguished," according to "The SWS Survey Review of 2004," which SWS president Mahar Mangahas presented last Wednesday at the Asian Institute of Management.

As to the "expected change in quality

PINOYS/ A21

THE BIG CATCH

The center of attraction for hundreds of Dumaguetenos and some German scuba divers early F shark weighing more than nine tons. It was found dead off the beach of Barangay Piapi in Duma

ALEX PAL/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

riday is a 9.3 meter female whale aguete City. *(Story on Page A17.)*

entable
Crisis

Editors' Note. In the words of the just-resigned energy secretary, 2005 is a "make or break year" for the electric power industry. This year, new capacity must be built for Mindanao, 70 percent of Napocor must be privatized, and electricity rates must be raised to reflect true costs again. If not, then a power crisis will be upon us.

In many ways, the key issue is public reception. Will the public, already paying high rates, accept more rate increases? In a joint undertaking, the INQUIRER teamed up with Inq7.net, INQUIRER Libre, InqTV, Cebu Daily News, Tumbok and Bandera to explore the issue—and to see if the crisis is truly just around the corner.

On Inq7.net/power
Two opposing briefing papers: First Generation Holdings and Agham/People Opposed to Warrantless Electricity Rates

Energy chief now admits crisis real, action 'VITAL'

By Abigail L. Ho
Business

ABOUT a month before last year's elections, Energy Secretary Vince Perez declared the threat of a power crisis "imaginary."

"There is no looming power crisis for the country, contrary to speculations," he said then.

He was referring, in particular, to the prediction by Federico Lopez, president of the Meralco-affiliated First Generation Holdings, that a power crisis might happen as early as 2007.

Today, however, Perez seems to be

ENERGY/ A21

What crisis? Militants say it's baloney

By John Nery

POWER crisis? "That's baloney!"

Nasecore president Pete Ilagan belittled projections by both the Department of Energy and the Lopez-owned First Generation Holdings Corp. that a shortage in power supply was imminent.

"Walang basis *yung* power crisis," the founder of the National Association of

WHAT/ A21

Pinoy dies in 3-train wreck in US

GLENDALE, California—Alfonso Sanchez Caballero, a Filipino accountant, died in a violent three-train wreck Wednesday when a man drove his Jeep onto the commuter railroad tracks in a botched attempt to commit suicide.

Caballero, 62, rode the Metrolink train nearly every day from his home in Los Angeles. He

and 10 other people died Wednesday in the accident.

The most important things in Caballero's life were his family and friends, relatives said.

"He was a very loyal father and loving husband," said nephew

PINOY/ A22

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/29/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Jamby sues Mike, seeks ₱100M

By Christine Avendaño, Volt Contreras and Nancy Carvajal

WHAT'S so funny? Only Sen. Joker Arroyo and Environment Secretary Mike Defensor know for sure. JESS YUSON

CLEARING the Madrigal clan of any logging concession in Quezon and Aurora, Environment Secretary Mike Defensor also hailed it as a "pillar of Philippine industry." But that did not stop Sen. Jamby Madrigal from filing a libel case against Defensor yesterday at the Pasay RTC. The senator takes her oath before Prosecutor Francisco Beron. JESS YUSON

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday said he was ready to face the P100-million libel charge against him by Sen. Jamby Madrigal.

Defensor said he was relieved that the issue was now before a court of justice.

"It's her right to file the case. I don't feel bad about it and now I can continue focusing on the job," he said.

Defensor, who was in the Senate yesterday to meet with Sen. Sergio Osmeña, joked that he would need a good lawyer and that might be Sen. Joker Arroyo, who has always been his counsel. Arroyo and Defensor used to be colleagues in the House of Representatives.

Defensor said he did drop in at the office of Arroyo who "shepherded me into a room" that turned out to be the office of Madrigal.

He was not to run into the senator who was at that very moment in a Pasay City court filing a P100-million libel suit against him.

No other recourse

Madrigal said she had no other recourse but to take the matter to court.

"I am one person who does not believe in trial by media so I brought it to the right forum which is the Pasay city court," she told a press briefing outside the office of chief prosecutor Francisco Beron.

"I have accepted the challenge of Mr. Michael Defensor for me to produce the body of evidence to disprove his allegations against me and my family," said Madrigal, reading from a prepared statement.

She said she filed for libel against Defensor because this was the "only remedy provided by law to rectify the baseless accusations made against me and my family."

"An untainted name and honor cannot be compensated by any amount," she said, noting that she and her family had "exerted efforts to ensure that our family's name, honor and reputation are not sacrificed or compromised."

Word war

The libel case was the culmination of a week-old word war between one of President Macapagal-Arroyo's most trusted Cabinet men and the opposition senator, a scion of one of the country's wealthiest families.

In media interviews last Saturday, Defensor reacted strongly to Madrigal's criticism of his anti-illegal logging campaign, saying the senator "needs to explain how big was her family's logging concessions in Aurora and Quezon."

Defensor reacted strongly to Madrigal's insinuation that his crackdown was targeting only local town officials rather than big-time illegal loggers who hide behind timber licenses and forest management agreements with the government.

Madrigal hit back hard with a privilege speech on Monday demanding that Defensor resign for maligning her family's honor. She denied having any logging interest in Luzon and portrayed her family as having been a major builder of the country's post-war industries.

Reconciliation

The secretary has since extended a hand of reconciliation to the senator. Yesterday he reiterated that there was "nothing personal" in the statements he had made concerning Madrigal.

He said he also did not say the Madrigal family was engaged in illegal logging. As for filing a case against the senator, he said he saw "no point" in doing so.

Earlier yesterday, Defensor made another peace overture to Madrigal, issuing a brief statement at around noon saying "it is unfortunate that the Madrigal family has been unnecessarily dragged into the logging controversy."

He said records in his department "show that the Madrigals have never owned or controlled any logging concession in Quezon and/or Aurora provinces."

Apology?

Without actually apologizing or referring to his earlier remarks that so enraged the senator, Defensor had only praises for the Madrigals, saying the family "has been one of the pillars of Philippine business and industry, firmly establishing a reputation of prudence and responsible stewardship of their business affairs."

But Madrigal would not be mollified. She told the press briefing she was willing to forgive the senator but would not withdraw the case.

She said Defensor has been telling the press about apologizing but never called or talked to her personally.

"He was just using the media about it which is not good," Madrigal said.

She said she had given the environment secretary enough time to correct his statements but he had instead continued to malign her name and her family, the most recent of which was an interview with television host Dong Puno.

Madrigal said she cannot think of any reason why Defensor would continue to disparage her and her family by saying that they were engaged in illegal logging in Quezon and Aurora. The two provinces had been made vulnerable to damage from typhoons because of illegal logging.

"I had given Mr. Defensor enough time to reflect on the statements he had made. However, he chose to challenge me to produce evidence and bring it to the right forum," Madrigal said

She said the financial damages that she's claiming against Defensor would be used for the rehabilitation of the families of typhoon victims in Aurora and Infanta.

Boncodin to undergo kidney transplant

BONCODIN

ANOTHER member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's economic managers group is moving out but only for a while and for medical reasons.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said she would take a medical leave to undergo a kidney transplant surgery. Boncodin said this will take her out of office for one or two months.

She said this operation had long been planned but it was finally scheduled for next month. She had wanted the operation done only after Congress has passed the 2005 budget. Congressional hearings would start next month.

Boncodin said the President will assign one of her undersecretaries to man her office while she was on leave. She plans to return to work upon her recovery.

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MEDIA MURDERS

Too late, too little, says int'l journalists group of gov't's response

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Too late, too little and too insignificant.

This was how an international fact-finding team looking into the rash of media killings in the Philippines described the response of authorities to the murders of journalists.

Despite the outcry from media organizations, the government has to stem the killings and the "sense of lawlessness" in the country, especially in the provinces, said Gerard Noonan of the Asia-Pacific office of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

Based on the IFJ's visits and consultations in Mindanao and the Visayas, the emerging picture "is a tendency for respect of law and order to have broken down and to be tolerant of extra-judicial killings in communities in the provinces," said Noonan, senior writer of the "Sydney Morning Herald" newspaper.

Fact-finding team

Noonan is part of the fact-finding team of the Brussels-based IFJ and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) that is investigating the killings of journalists in the country and the failure of the authorities to solve most of these murders.

The team includes Rustam Fachri Mandayun of the Indonesian Journalists Association (AJI) and a former executive editor of Tempo, Indonesia's most influential newsweekly, Carlos Conde, NUJP secretary general, and INQUIRER correspondent Ma. Diosa Labiste, and national director, respectively.

Findings on Monday

The team visited General Santos City on Wednesday, Iloilo City on Thursday and Legazpi City yesterday and talked with the victims' families and friends, investigators and journalists.

The team will present its preliminary findings at a press conference in Manila on Jan. 31.

Sense of frustration

Conde said there was "growing sense of frustration" toward the slow pace of justice and the prosecution of the cases among the families of victims in Mindanao and the Visayas.

"We heard the painful stories of wives, sons and daughters whose lives have been torn apart by the murders, children who stopped going to school and widows who would not know how to find the means to feed the children left behind," said Conde at a press conference in Iloilo City.

The families of slain Aklan broadcasters Herson "Boy" Hinolan and Rolando Ureta, Iloilo broadcasters Severino Arcones, Eddie Suede and newspaper publisher and editor Josef Nava, attended the meeting in Iloilo City as did representatives from the police and the prosecutor's office.

Elusive justice

"He left three children for me to take care alone. I thought I would not survive," said Tess Arcones, widow of Severino, who was gunned down on October 17, 1989.

"It has been a very long four years that justice has been elusive to me and to my son Ken-Ken," said Emely Ureta, the widow of Rolando Ureta who was killed on Jan. 3, 2001 in Lezo town in Aklan.

An IFJ report on the situation of the journalists worldwide released last week cited the Philippines as the most dangerous place for journalists last year, next only to Iraq.

RP is No. 2

Iraq accounted for 19 of 129 journalists killed in the line of duty last year. Noonan said this was not surprising because Iraq was in the midst of an invasion and an insurrection.

"But what came as a shock is that the Philippines came in second with 13 murdered journalists last year. There is no excuse for a country like the Philippines for this murderous behavior," said Noonan.

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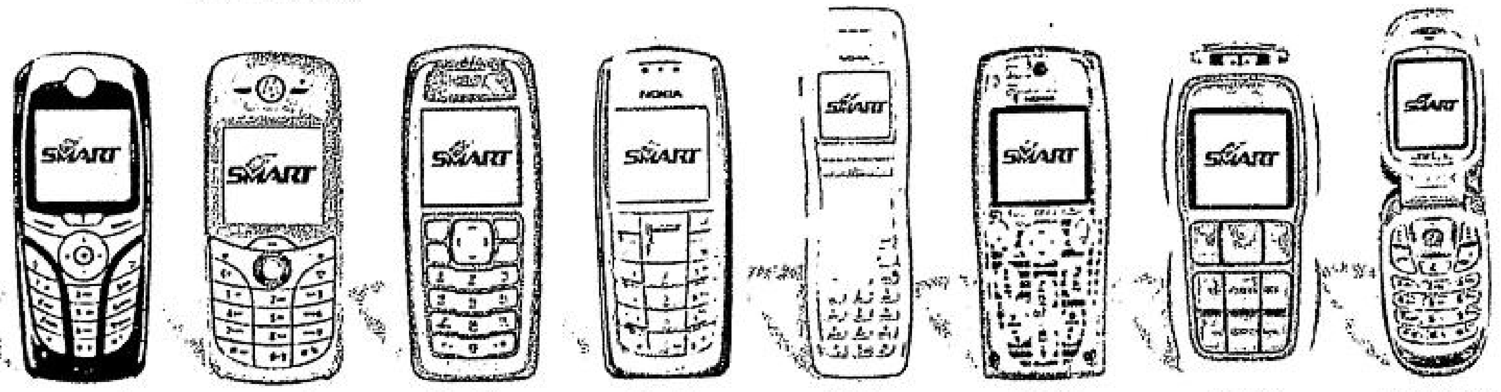

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Pinoy to hang in Malaysia for drug deal

By TJ Burgonio

THE PHILIPPINES will appeal a death sentence imposed by a Malaysian court on a Filipino caught carrying illegal drugs in 2002, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Undersecretary Jose Brillantes has issued urgent instructions to the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur to "exhaust all legal remedies" to help seaman Nelson Diana who was sentenced to "death by hanging" by a Malaysian lower court on Wednesday after finding him guilty of carrying 508.6 grams of cocaine, said DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque.

RP to appeal

"We will appeal the case," said Asuque, who said the Malaysian court has allowed a period of appeal and has not set a date for execution.

The embassy in KL was also instructed to make representations with Diana's court-appointed lawyer, Srikhant Pillai, to appeal the case before the Malaysian Court of Appeals.

"Undersecretary Brillantes also instructed the Philippine Embassy to ensure that the rights of Mr. Diana are properly protected at all times and that all necessary consular assistance be extended to him," Asuque said.

Wife briefed

Yesterday, Diana's wife was briefed on her husband's case at the DFA. She asked not to be identified and has requested the media not to report on the case "since they're not criminals."

Records showed that Diana was held and charged by Malaysian police for bringing in a briefcase containing the illegal drug at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on Aug. 22, 2002.

Diana was flying back to Manila from Europe and stopped off at KL for a connecting flight to Bangkok, Thailand.

Airport police questioned Diana on his yet unclaimed baggage and was later asked to submit it for inspection. Before the inspection could begin, however, Diana admitted he was carrying drugs.

Malaysian police found the cocaine concealed inside the briefcase's inner lining.

Possession of over 40 grams of illegal drugs is considered trafficking, a crime punishable by death under Malaysia's Dangerous Drugs Act.

Grafters abuse Filipino values, says Jesuit team

By Armand N. Nocum

CORRUPT individuals both in government and the private sector have conveniently exploited positive Filipino values to rationalize and perpetuate corruption, according to the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (PSJ).

Officers and members of the PSJ have launched a program to try to bring back the good in Filipino values and traits, such as "*utang na loob*" (debt of gratitude), "*bayanihan* " (mutual aid), and "*pakikisama*" (companionship).

"We are corrupting our sound cultural traits," said Ronnie V. Amorado of the Ateneo de Davao University, who is part of a team of Jesuits that is initiating the holding of anti-graft seminars known as "EheM! Aha!" all over the country.

The Jesuits team has also produced the highly successful anticorruption manual "Ehem!," subtitled "A Manual for Deepening Involvement in Combating Corruption."

The PSJ's antigraft program is headed by Fr. Romeo J. Intengan SJ, the Jesuit Provincial Superior, with the help of the Jesuit committee on the evangelization of culture.

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 28 issue, a story on the Front Page—"Joker digs in to block VAT"—mentioned a "2-percent increase" in the value-added tax (VAT).

The phrase should read "two percentage point increase."

However, if we prefer to use percent to describe the VAT rate hike from 10% to 12%, then we say it is a 20-percent increase.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Palabrica, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address:rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

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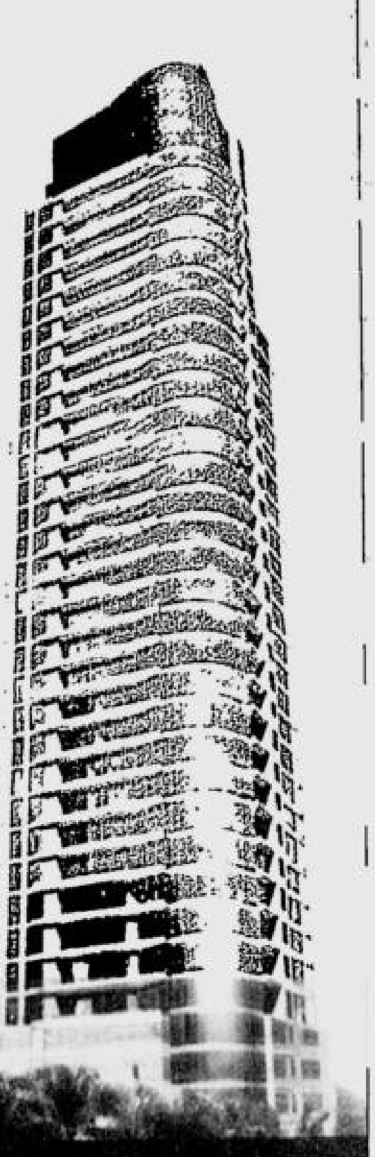


40 Moro rebels killed in airstrikes, says military

By Alcuin Papa

AIRSTRIKES on a suspected meeting of regional al-Qaida-linked group leaders left 40 dead including possibly two top Indonesian members of the Jemaah Islamiyah extremist group, the military said yesterday.

"Based on our technical monitoring of their (rebels) radio communications, there were 40 rebels killed, two are JI members whose identities remain unknown," Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, commander of the military's Southern Command, told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

No body recovered

The military said it had yet to recover a single body because the rebels take their dead with them as they withdraw from fighting.

"Their tradition is to drag along their casualties and bury them immediately. That's why we have yet to recover bodies of slain rebels." Braganza said.

However, Maj. Gen. Raul Relano, commander of the military's 6th Infantry Division, said only five rebels were killed, including one Indonesian JI member, after Thursday's bombing runs on their hideout in Maguindanao's Butilan Marsh.

'Foreigner killed'

Three rebels, he added, were wounded.

"The intelligence report said five were dead and three were wounded," Relano said. "One of those killed is a foreigner, presumably one of several Indonesian JI members hiding in the area with leaders of the local Abu Sayyaf group."

He said they had not verified if Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khaddafy Janjalani was killed "because our stand is that he is already dead although we don't have his body."

The military had claimed Janjalani died in a Dec. 19 military attack in the Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao.

Where's Janjalani?

Army spokesperson Col. Franklin del Prado said when the attack took place on Thursday, among those believed to be in the area were Janjalani and at least three Indonesian JI members, including Dulmatin, who allegedly played a key role in the Bali bombings in 2002.

Col. Gerry Jalandoni, chief of the 604th Infantry Brigade, said military agents could not say who among the Indonesians—Dulmatin, Mohammad Ali Abdulrahiman alias Muhayiha and Saki alias Maruan—was blown off during the air assaults.

Only one hurt

"We have strong evidence we hit them hard, we are scourging the area," the optimistic brigade chief said.

Eid Kabalu, spokesperson of the Muslim separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), said he had received reports that just one person had been injured but that several houses had been destroyed in the airstrike.

On Thursday, government helicopter gunships and planes attacked an area in the Butilen Marsh in Datu Piang, Maguindanao to intercept a suspected meeting between leaders of the al-Qaida-affiliated Abu Sayyaf, JI members, and an MILF faction that attacked a military outpost in Mamasapano, Maguindanao on Jan. 10, leaving 21 soldiers and rebels dead.

MILF commanders Abdul Rahman Binago and Abdul Wahid Tundok led that attack in retaliation for the death of Binago's brother who was killed by government troops. *With reports from Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau; AP and AFP.*

MILF protests AFP attacks in Maguindanao

By Alcuin Papa

THE MILITARY attack on a suspected meeting between the al-Qaida-affiliated Abu Sayyaf Group and the Jemaah Islamiyah militant groups in Maguindanao could affect the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front especially since the latter already filed a formal protest.

Military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, chair of the military side of the joint MILF-GRP Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities, said he received the other night a formal protest filed by his MILF counterpart, Von Al-Haq.

The joint CCCH is the body that oversees the implementation of the ceasefire between the two sides which was signed in 2002.

According to Yano, Al-Haq said the military did not coordinate Thursday's air attacks at the Butilen Marsh, Maguindanao, with the MILF.

For its part, the military had "informally" explained that the attack was directed against the Abu Sayyaf and the JI—not the MILF, Yano said.

He added that the MILF's protest would not affect the coming peace talks between the government and the MILF, set for February in Kuala Lumpur.

"I don't think this would be a stumbling block. According to a joint communique we had already signed, they (MILF) agreed that they would help us go after the ASG and other terrorist and criminal groups," Yano told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

Today, the joint CCCH is set to meet in Davao City to formalize the implementation of an Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group that would identify and locate criminal and terrorists groups in areas where the MILF operates.

Wishful thinking, Palace twits Bro. Eddie

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

WISHFUL thinking.

This is how Malacañang has described evangelist Eddie Villanueva's claim that he was offered a government post in exchange for giving his support to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

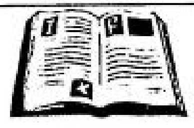
"That is wishful thinking. Maybe he was wishing that somebody would make him an offer but in fact nobody did," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in an interview over the dzRB government radio station yesterday.

Bunye talked about Villanueva's "wishful thinking" for the second straight day, in the course of answering Villanueva's accusation that First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo had allegedly orchestrated the filing of a estafa case against him.

Villanueva claimed that Arroyo was behind the filing of estafa charges against him by Benito Araneta, a cousin of the First Gentleman, over a botched Zoe TV deal. Arroyo has denied the accusation.

Villanueva's charges and Bunye's comments seem to indicate that the prospects of a reconciliation between the President and Villanueva, one of her defeated rivals in the May presidential election, are getting dim.

THE DAILY GOSPEL



Saturday, January 29, 2005
3rd Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading:	**Heb 11:1-2,8-19**
Gospel:	**Mark 4:35-41**

On that day when evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go across to the other side." So they left the crowd and took him away in the boat he had been sitting in, and other boats set out with him. Then a storm gathered and it began to blow a gale. The waves spilled over into the boat so that it was soon filled with water. And Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

They woke him up and said, "Master, don't you care if we sink?" As Jesus awoke, he rebuked the wind and ordered the sea, "Quiet now! Be still!" The wind dropped and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you so frightened? Do you still have no faith?"

But they were terrified and they said to one another, "Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

Commentary

Jesus often leaves where he has been teaching, borrows a boat and goes across to the other side of the lake. A storm comes up and Jesus is asleep, oblivious to the rages of water, rain and wind. They wake him and he stands and rebukes the elements: "Quiet now! Be still!" And creation obeys him. Jesus turns to the disciples and asks: "why are you so frightened? Do you still have no faith?" They are oblivious to his presence and have no knowledge of who this man Jesus is—they are terrified that the wind and sea obey him.

Do we know this man Jesus or have we slipped into relating to him as a teacher, a man with insight or wisdom and forgotten that this is the Jesus, savior, the Word of God, stronger than any prophet of old, beloved Son of God, the wisdom of God in flesh, the power of God in a human being? What frightens us? Jesus, help us to remember your presence with us!

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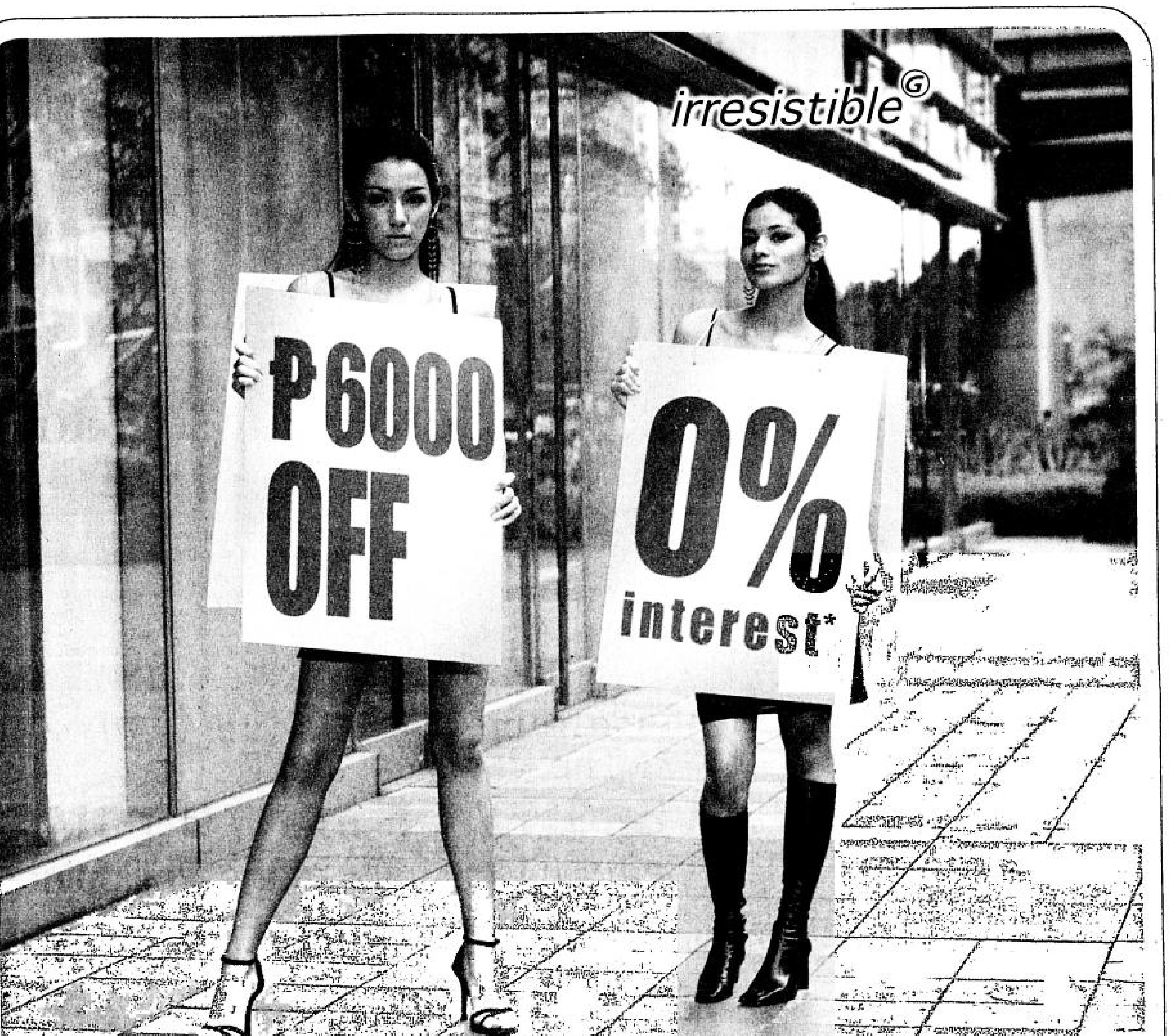

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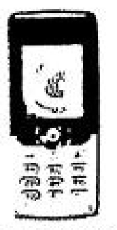
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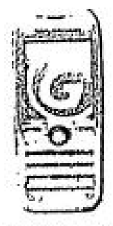
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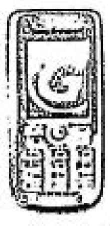
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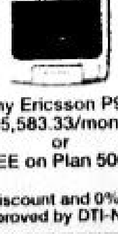
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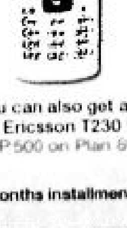
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No moratorium on new colleges

CHEd admits ADB is right

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE COMMISSION on Higher Education said it would not impose a moratorium on new colleges and universities despite the perceived "oversupply."

"We're not suspending the approval of new applications. But we're tightening the process in the sense that we're centralizing the approval of applications," Commissioner Cristina Padolina said yesterday.

Padolina admitted the findings of a recent study funded by the Asian Development Bank that the country already has too many universities and colleges, not all of which offer quality education.

She said starting this year, the CHEd en banc which is composed of the chair and four commissioners, would be the one to approve the applications of new colleges and universities.

Such authority was previously exercised by CHEd's regional directors.

"It's just that we'd like to be more careful about opening new universities and colleges because there are really many of them around already," said Padolina.

"We have to see to it that the new ones will offer only quality programs," she added.

The study, conducted by the British Council, said CHEd has failed to ensure quality when it allowed hundreds of colleges and universities to sprout.

British Council executive director Gill Westaway said the country already has too many universities and colleges "which are diluting the quality."

At the last count, there are 1,380 universities and colleges throughout the country: 1,214 are privately-run while 166 are either state-run or local government-run universities and colleges.

About 2.46 million students are enrolled in these universities and colleges.

As one CHEd official put it, education is a "free enterprise" so anyone could put up a school.

But it is up to CHEd to regulate these universities and colleges based on quality standards which the British Council said have not been strictly met.

Padolina said it will still be the CHEd regional directors who would decide on the application of existing universities and colleges to offer new courses.

But the CHEd en banc has lately taken on the authority to approve new nursing schools, after a resurgence in the demand for nurses abroad resulted in the "mushrooming" of nursing schools all over the country.

Pledges of support pouring in for honest driver with sick son

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Pledges of support are flooding in for the family of a driver who chose to return the money he found in his tricycle than use it for his ailing two-year-old son.

On Saturday, Darwin Calvario found a bag containing checks worth P270,000 and P26,000 in cash in the back seat of his tricycle.

Calvario, a father of four, decided to return the money to its rightful owner though he could have used it for a badly needed operation of his son, who suffers from *imperforate anus* (no anal opening).

The owner of the money, Sarah Joe, a businesswoman from Surallah, gave the tricycle driver's family P6,000 in cash and a sack of rice as a reward. She promised to help with the operation of Calvario's son.

Calvario said that the day he found the money he stayed home the rest of the day thinking about what he should do. He worried about his son, Cesar Dave, who needs immediate colostomy.

His fellow drivers advised him to keep the money for the operation.

But when he told his wife, Chona, she wholeheartedly agreed that he should return the money.

Calvario said he hardly slept that Saturday night. On Sunday, he decided to go to dxES Radyo Bombo for help in finding the owner.

For showing exemplary honesty despite his miserable situation, Calvario was promised by the city mayor, Pedro Acharon Jr., that the mayor would pay for his son's operation.

The mayor also offered the City Integrated Hospital as the venue for the child's surgical operation.

DARWIN Calvario with ailing two-year-old son, Cesar Dave AQUILES ZONIO

Upon learning of Calvario's story, Dr. Francisco Lorenzo promised to do the operation for free.

"I was really touched by what Darwin did. Because of that, I am waiving my professional fee. I will do the surgical operation free of charge," Lorenzo said.

City councilor Lourdes Casabuena, who chairs the council's committee on women and family affairs, has sponsored a council resolution commending the tricycle driver.

Aside from the mayor and Lorenzo, a certain Rochelle Zabala from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office reportedly visited the Calvario family on Wednesday to relay the agency's willingness to help.

Others who have indicated their intention to help include the Kapuso Foundation of the GMA television network and the Bantay-Bata Foundation of the ABS-CBN network.

The Calvario family lives in a small, semi-concrete house located at the end of a dusty street, Apitong Road, Balite, Barangay Lagao here.

Darwin's P150 average daily income from driving a tricycle is hardly enough to make both ends meet. For a colostomy bag alone, the family has to spend P70 a day. Sometimes they are forced to use plastic bags. The boy disposes of his body wastes through a tube on the left side of his stomach.

The family spent about P100,000 for the child's operation in 2002, just a month after he was born. Darwin's mother, a public school teacher at Buayan Elementary School, paid for most of the operation. The family had to borrow money from a loan shark to pay the rest of the hospital bills.

Calvario said the doctor had advised them that his son has to have another operation within two years for him to be able to live a normal life.

The boy loves to play basketball, despite his ailment. He showed this reporter how well he could dribble the ball.

Perhaps because of his illness, Dave is quite small compared to other children his age.

"He runs, he plays. He is healthy. That's why we want him to undergo an operation soon so that he can live a normal life. His mother could not work as the boy needs much attention because of his ailment," Darwin said.

Bishop tells mothers: Don't force your sons to become priests

By Blanche S. Rivera

TAKE it from an archbishop.

Parents should not force their sons to enter the priesthood if there is no initiative from the children themselves, Pangasinan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said.

Cruz, former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, said some priests who eventually leave the vocation cite fulfilling their parents' wish as the reason for becoming priests.

"There is moral pressure from the parents especially the mother, who forces the son to become a priest. It has a symbolic value," Cruz said, citing the situation in provinces where having a priest-son is viewed as a status symbol.

"They are too young when they enter the seminary. They did not know yet what they are leaving behind," he said.

Cruz, one of the most respected canon lawyers in the Philippine Catholic Church, has been handling dispensation cases of priests since 1985.

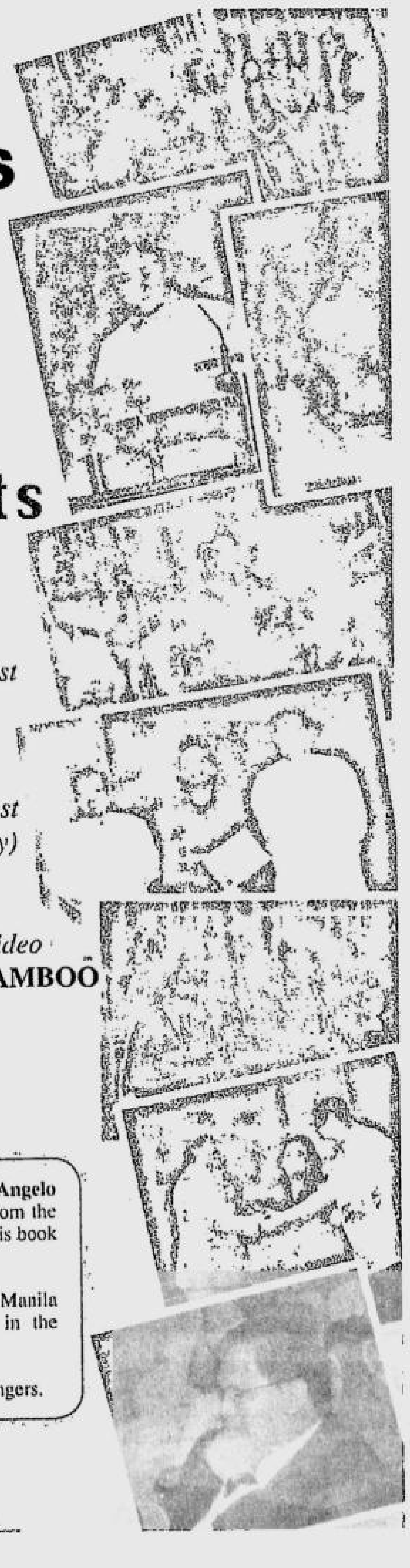
He said he has processed around 200 cases over the past 20 years. He recommended the dispensation of 20 priests last year.

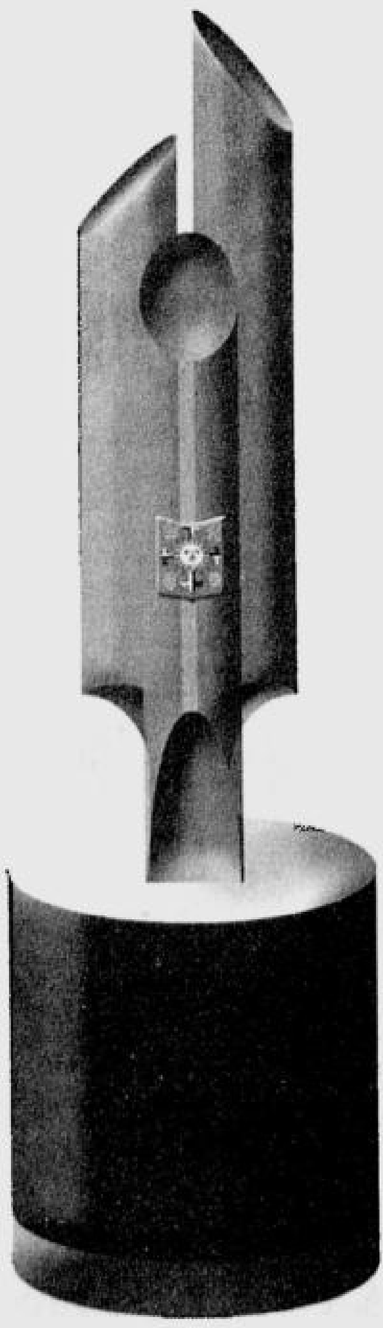
"I have to be convinced that the priest cannot really live his commitment because of some disposition, attitude that is not consonant to the vows," said Cruz, who heads the CBCP's National Appellate Matrimonial Tribunal.

Priests who can no longer keep their commitment to their vows have to ask for dispensation from their sacred obligations to celibacy, obedience to the bishop and praying the breviary or holy hour.

The priests, however, should be at least 40 years old. The petition for dispensation would go through the bishop, then the tribunal and eventually, the Pope, who has the sole authority to dispense priests from the ministry.

The tribunal would interview the friends and acquaintances of the priest, his bishop, and other people who could attest if the priest is unable to fulfill his commitments.





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Gov't steps up moves to stop bird flu entry

GOVERNMENT officials said yesterday precautions have been heightened to keep the country free of bird flu, which has killed 10 people in Vietnam over the past month.

The Philippines has banned the import of all poultry products from countries affected by bird flu, and Agriculture Undersecretary Cesar Drilon told reporters the ban will remain in place.

The government has also installed disinfectant foot baths at seaports, airports and poultry farms, enforced a ban on the capture and killing of migratory birds, and encouraged farmers to keep their livestock away from lakes and marshes where migratory birds flock.

Surveillance in 20 "high-risk" areas has also been stepped up, officials said.

Jose Molina, the director of the Bureau of Animal Industry, said if an infection is found, all poultry within a three-kilometer radius will be culled.

Pamphlets on the bird flu will be distributed nationwide, Drilon said.

Drilon added that the country is taking advantage of a Japanese ban on poultry imports from Thailand.

Bird flu killed or forced the slaughter of millions of birds when it emerged in 10 Asian countries last year. The virus jumped to humans in Vietnam, where it has killed 30 people in the past year, and Thailand, where it killed 12.

Since Dec. 30, 10 people have died of bird flu in Vietnam. *AP*

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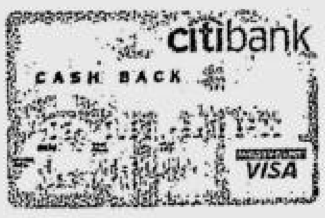

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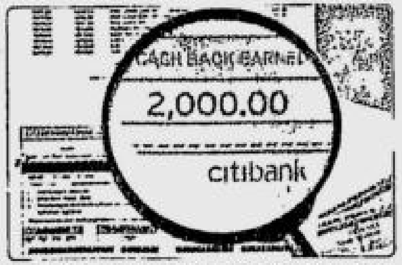

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PER DOH-BFAD PERMIT NO. 0020 S. 2005

SEC to CAP: Show us your money first . . .

From page A1

us to do that (give them a dealer's license)," Barin said.

The SEC suspended CAP's license to sell educational plans in August last year.

"They should not also keep telling themselves that they have complied because that is their assessment. For as long as we are not satisfied, they don't get the license," Barin said.

The SEC has not given CAP a deadline to comply with its requirements, including the fresh capital infusion.

"Right now there is no deadline. There is no dealer's license so there is no securities to sell ... what we have done is to impress on them the urgency of the situation. They keep promising. They are showing us documents. At the same time *lumalakad naman sila* (they are taking action)," Barin said.

To shore up its finances, CAP plans to raise its capital from P300 million to P8 billion and obtain a $300-million loan from a California-based fund.

Property swap

CAP is seeking SEC approval for its capital hike through a property-for-share swap with investors involving 2,900 hectares of property worth P6 billion.

It is also seeking approval from the SEC for the terms of a $300-million loan from California-based First American Investments.

CAP is also asking SEC's help in computing the amount that CAP would pay its plan holders in the next 30 years.

Barin said that an SEC oversight committee had recommended last Sept. 30 the closure of CAP since the pre-need company was already insolvent.

780,000 plan holders

The SEC, however, is wary of closing down CAP due to its possible adverse impact on CAP's over 780,000 plan holders.

"If you put it under receivership, let us just imagine the scenario, *di rin makakabayad ang receiver. Talo pa rin ang* plan holder. (The receiver still won't be able to pay for the liabilities. The plan holder will still be at the losing end)," Barin said.

CAP is currently in talks with a Canadian insurer for a possible equity stake in the company.

CAP president Enrique A. Sobrepeña Jr. said the investor is no longer new to CAP and had been interested in buying into a pre-need firm in the Philippines.

Sobrepeña said the Toronto-based investor was willing to put in about $100 million into CAP.

CAP first vice president Bobby Cafe said the pre-need firm is also in talks with First American Investments to convert its loan to CAP into equity. FAI's loan exposure in CAP would be equivalent to roughly 52 percent stake in the company and would entitle it to six board seats in CAP's 11-man board.

FAI earlier agreed to provide $300 million in loans to CAP which will be backed by receipts linked to the MRT bonds.

Open to Senate probe

CAP officials said the company is open to any Senate inquiry about its financial woes.

"We will be glad to explain things to them," Sobrepeña said.

Three Senate committees—banks, trade and commerce, and accounts—are set to hold hearings on the financial woes of CAP.

In a privilege speech, Sen. Sergio Osmeña III had said that CAP should not be allowed to continue selling plans or to collect on existing plans given its shaky finances.

The probe may also put in jeopardy CAP's health insurance business in the Senate.

One of three Senate committees—the accounts committee chaired by Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., is set to look at the health insurance of 1,000 Senate employees with CAP.

Osmeña had raised concern over the health insurance of Senate employees given that CAP's deficit on its actuarial reserve liability amounted to P18 billion last year and its debts reached P25 billion.

"We are spending P15 million in premiums and in fact, CAP is asking for an additional P5 million (this year) and that's why we're investigating because we don't want problems for our employees," Villar told reporters.

He said the Senate may look for a new company to handle the health insurance of Senate employees, adding that payments to CAP may also be suspended pending the results of the investigation.

Osmeña said the accounts committee would come up with a finding on the matter.

"So maybe we can cancel the contract with CAP-HMO and look for another fellow," Osmeña said.

In defense of Mar

Osmeña also came to the defense of Sen. Mar Roxas who was accused by former SEC chair Perfecto Yasay of trying to put pre-need industries out of business in favor of insurance companies.

He said Yasay's accusation was unfair to Roxas as he stressed that even if preneed industries collapse this would not necessarily benefit insurance companies.

Yesterday, Roxas urged CAP to pay for the tuition fees of its plan holders in the wake of reports that checks issued by CAP to several schools had bounced.

Since then, almost all universities and colleges have refused to accept checks issued by CAP for their scholars' tuition.

CHEd's appeal

But the Commission on Higher Education yesterday urged universities and colleges to extend "all possible consideration" to CAP students.

"CHEd strongly urges these higher education institutions to give all due considerations and possible remedies especially to those students under the CAP plan who are expecting to graduate this semester," CHEd said in a statement.

It was the first time that CHEd intervened in behalf of parents and students with CAP educational plans since reports about CAP's insolvency came out last year.

CHEd said it understood why the schools have refused to accept CAP checks, but said it also "sympathizes with the plight of parents/plan holders who are now left with no immediate and commensurate remedies against CAP."

CHEd said it will join the efforts of other government agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry and the SEC "to provide a reasonable and lasting solution" to the problem of CAP plan holders.

CAP, however, has assured the public that the company would honor all its obligations.

To honor obligations

In a statement, Cafe said that CAP in its 24 years of operations has never defaulted in its obligations.

"With the solutions in place, CAP would like to assure the public that it will not default. If CAP was able to meet its maturing obligations when its capitalization was only P300 million, it should be able to deliver the services with its increased P8 billion capitalization," Cafe said.

Despite CAP's assurance, however, jittery CAP plan holders, particularly in the provinces, want a full refund of their investments.

Demands for refunds

In Calauag, Quezon, CAP plan holders yesterday trooped to the local branch of CAP to demand the full return of their investments.

But after hearing the explanation of the local branch official, most of CAP's clients decided to stick it out and "gamble" their investment with the fate of the beleaguered firm.

Socorro Dapula, who lost a house and store in a three-hour blaze on Thursday, was one of the CAP clients who sought a refund of their investment.

"We lost everything to the fire. Our cooking pans, plates, savings ... everything. I don't even have a cedula," she said.

Dapula, however, managed to save the CAP certificate of full payment for the educational plan of their son, Jose Paulo. The certificate has a gross price of P291,000.

"After the tragedy, we have to start again. It's good that we have this plan that we could depend on," she said. She brought the certificate to Andy Martizano, CAP senior vice president for the provinces of Quezon, Laguna and Marinduque, to get a refund of her investment.

Martizano, however, told Dapula that there would be a little delay in the reimbursement.

Delay in reimbursement

He admitted that CAP is facing cash flow problems after plan holders stopped paying their amortizations to the company. But he assured the plan holders that the company still has P8.8 billion in trust fund assets.

Upon hearing the assurance, the relieved plan holders said they expect CAP to honor the agreement. *With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

RP bonds issue stinks, says solon

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACANANG and foreign bond traders may shout "Yahoo!" in the wake of the blistering success of the country's $1.5 billion bond offering, but Rep. Joey Salceda isn't joining the chorus. In fact, he wants Congress to launch an inquiry into the government's borrowing strategy.

The Albay lawmaker said the government paid an "obscene" price for the 25-year IOUs that he said would cost the country P126 million a year in additional payments annually

"The bond issue is oversubscribed only because the spread is overpriced. It stinks to the farthest galaxy," Salceda said in a phone interview. "Describing it as the most successful Philippine bond offering is adding insult to in jury."

The bond offering was sold at 9.7 percent, or 503 basis points over US Treasury notes, the benchmark used in pricing international bonds. Government officials were happy because they expected the bonds to fetch 9.875 percent, or 515 basis points over US Treasury, and they sold $1.5 billion worth of bonds from the original $1 billion because they were swamped with $8 billion in bids.

But Salceda questioned why the government would borrow at a cost of 503 basis points when the prevailing price for comparable Philippine bonds in the market was 480 basis points.

Summon DOF officials

Salceda said Congress should look into the foreign borrowings of the government by summoning officials of the Department of Finance, who have yet to account for last year's National Power Corp. bond fiasco that led to the resignation of the National Treasurer and the top investment consultant of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, who disagreed with the borrowing strategy.

In September last year, the DOF sold $1 billion worth of Napocor bonds at 496 basis points above US Treasury. Salceda said investors earned a windfall of P100 million because the bonds were sold at 32 basis points more than the existing spread then of 464 basis points.

Why the rush?

"They should be investigated for either incompetence in securing the best interest of the government or lack of public transparency," Salceda said.

He questioned the rush in borrowing money from abroad so soon after Standard and Poor's lowered the country's credit rating by one notch. The lawmaker said the government could have waited until it had privatized Napocor's National Transmission Co. and Congress had passed the bill raising the value added tax rate so that the government could have obtained more favorable rates.

Salceda said Congress would look into how the DOF priced the bond, how they chose the underwriters, and how the bonds were allocated.

He said: "The investigation should result in fundamental changes in the conduct of bond issues including the way the underwriter is chosen. There seems to be an evolving dependence on or one or few houses." "We will review all bond issues since 1993 ... not just (for) prospective policymaking but for possible violations of law."

Peso nears P54 to $1; stocks soar

From page A1

year. The influx of foreign funds, in turn, perked up local stocks to five-year highs.

Also, about $201.1 million worth of "hot" money or portfolio investments went to government securities, as investors took advantage of rising yields.

1st quarter

The association of foreign exchange traders, ACI Philippines, has already predicted that the peso would appreciate to the 54 level within the first quarter.

BSP managing director for research Diwa Guinigundo said the peso's appreciation sent a positive signal that the economy was doing well.

"Our previous problem was one of credibility. We failed to deliver on a lot of fronts, particularly in the fiscal sector," Guinigundo said.

"But with the way things are turning, it looks like we will be able to deliver on the key fiscal reform measures," he said.

Guinigundo said the peso's appreciation would not hurt the country's exports.

Exports won't be hurt

"We have reached the point where we are no longer dependent on lower peso value to boost our exports," he said.

In the global market, Guinigundo said it was more important to compete in terms of quality and efficiency of delivery.

He also said the Philippines was moving to a higher value added type of exports. In garments, for instance, he said the country was selling more higher-value added products, such as lingeries, suits and jackets while the same shift was seen in the electronics sector.

This year, Guinigundo said export earnings would grow by another 10 percent and imports by 13 percent.

Dollar earnings from trade receipts are likewise helping boost the peso since the start of the year.

Purisima's vow

As the peso gained ground on the dollar, Finance Secretary-designate Cesar Purisima yesterday vowed to press on with fiscal reforms to reverse the cash-poor government's weak revenue collection.

"The revenue to GDP must increase to at least 15 or 16 percent," Purisima said in a speech to the Makati Business Club.

He said the Philippine revenue to gross domestic product ratio, estimated at 13.5 percent in 2004, was "the lowest among our peer group countries."

Better revenue collection would allow the government to reduce its debt to GDP ratio from about 77 percent and secure the country's access to capital markets.

"We need to maintain that access," Purisima said.

Government critics were unimpressed by the peso's strong showing and by predictions of more foreign investments in the country.

"Costs of living have gone up while the purchasing power of the peso continues to go down. President Arroyo should not pat her own back just yet," Anakpawis party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran said.

Mining hurts environment

Beltran also warned that the entry of new investors into the country, especially in the mining sector, could translate into "copious tears" for Filipinos and the destruction of the environment.

"President Arroyo has put on the auction block millions of hectares of Philippine land and sea areas, and opened them up for mining," Beltran said.

He said thousands of Filipinos in the countryside would be displaced by foreign corporations and the agriculture-based livelihood destroyed by open-pit mining.

Renato Reyes, secretary-general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, said the peso's performance and the entry of new foreign investments were not indicators of long-term economic growth "but are spasmodic developments that can dissipate any time."

Brief spasms

"The supposed economic growth is still quite far from being felt in the guts. It won't be felt if prices continue to go up as a result of new taxes," Reyes said.

Reyes also attacked Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye for reportedly saying that only the patrons of expensive restaurants and hotels would bear the burden of the proposed value-added tax increase.

Reyes said the materials and ingredients used for preparing food, whether in small eateries or posh hotels, would be covered by the tax.

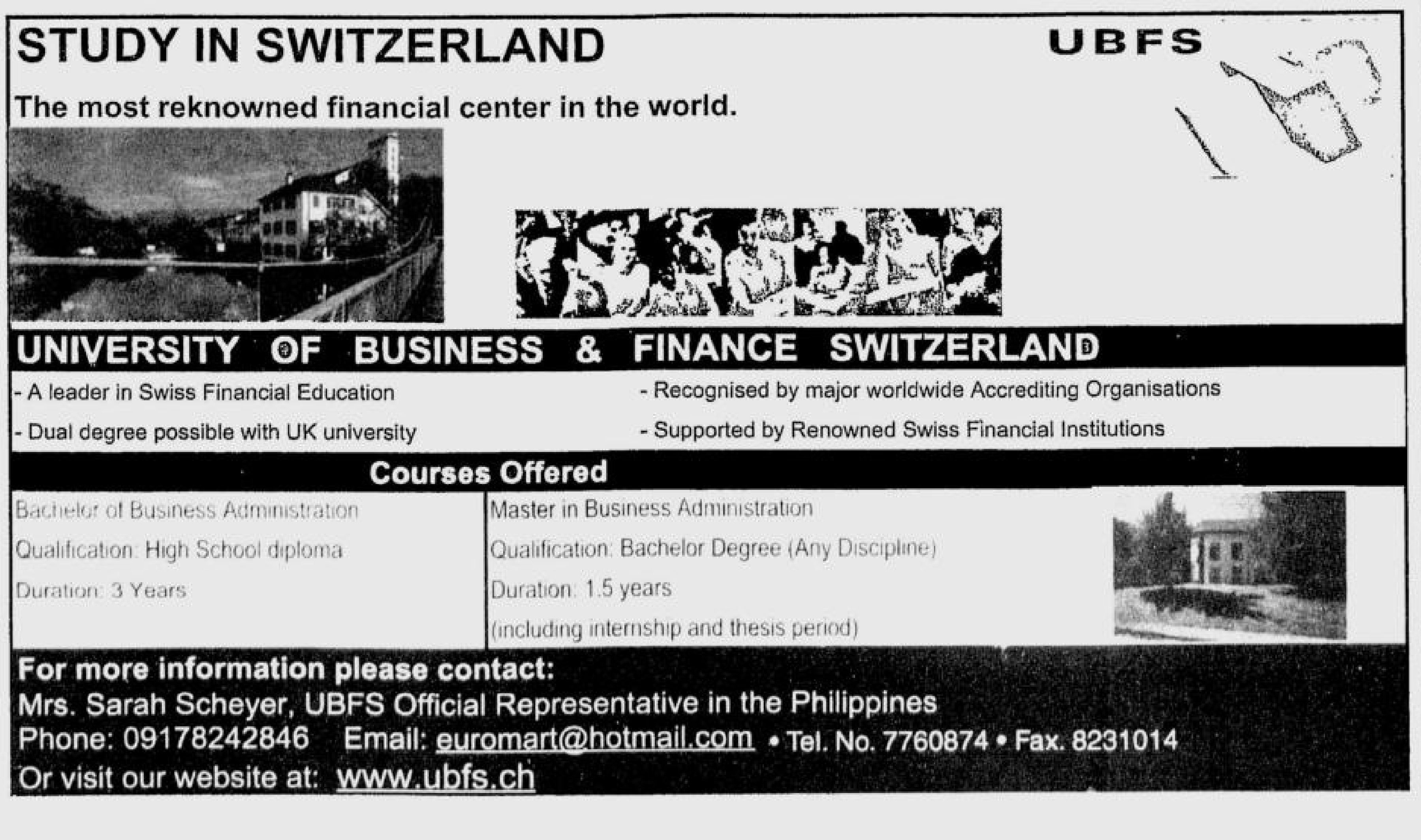
"When was the last time Bunye ate in a carinderia? Eating in carinderias is not as cheap as it used to be," he said.

The farmers' group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas warned of higher rice prices if and when the two-percentage-point VAT increase became a law.

Junk VAT

"[Rice traders] can use [it] as a pretext to increase the price of rice because (of the) many processes that rice goes through before it gets to the market," said KMP spokesperson Willy Marbella.

"It is our position that the VAT should be junked as well as the other laws further pushing us into poverty," he said. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Norman Bordadora, Delfin T. Mallari, Southern Luzon Bureau and Reuters*



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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Iraq exiles vote; 6 die in poll violence

BAGHDAD—Insurgents set off a car bomb and attacked polling stations and security forces in several Iraqi cities Friday, killing at least six people as Iraqi exiles across the globe began voting in their country's landmark election.

Four people were killed in a suicide car bomb attack at a power station in the southern Baghdad neighborhood of Duta, while an Iraqi soldier and a policeman were killed in separate attacks in Samarra and Kirkuk.

Campaigning by candidates for Sunday's election officially ended on Friday, as Iraqi expatriates in 14 countries—from the Middle East to Australia to the United States—began voting in a three-day process.

"Yes, we did it!" shouted Ali al-Kabeer, clapping his hands after casting his ballot in Dubai and breaking into tears as he hugged his wife who also voted.

Kabeer, a commercial director, said he had "been waiting for this moment for 54 years," 24 of which he has spent in England and the UAE. "I'm doing this for my children... it's the first step in a thousand-mile journey."

However, insurgents, including al-Qaida frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have vowed to wreck the country's first democratic vote in decades and there are fears the violence will pursue right through the election weekend and beyond.

At least 60 people have been killed in a spate of attacks across the country over the past two days alone, in addition to the killing of 31 US military personnel in a helicopter crash in western Iraq Wednesday.

The Iraqi authorities have ordered tough security measures, including a curfew, sealing off the borders and the closure of Baghdad international airport from Saturday.

US President George W. Bush has urged Iraqis to brave death threats and seize what he termed an "historic opportunity" to vote, while a British newspaper reported the United States and Britain have privately agreed on a way of withdrawing their troops from Iraq.

Supporters of Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man, on Thursday posted a video on the Internet of their murder of a candidate in Iraq's elections from the party of US-backed interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. *AFP*

AN IRAQI exile shows his right index finger stained with blue ink after casting his vote at a polling station in Amman, Jan. 28. REUTERS

Finland excels in environment, Nokor at bottom

DAVOS, Switzerland—Finland is the world leader in pursuing environmentally friendly policies, according to a study of 146 countries for a global index Friday that ranks North Korea, Iraq and Taiwan at the bottom.

The 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), unveiled at the World Economic Forum being held in the Swiss resort of Davos, put the United States in 45th place, although ahead of Britain in 66th.

The index is based on an assessment of a country's natural resources, past and present pollution levels, environmental management efforts and how well it improves its environmental performance over time.

While the United States scored well for its water quality and environment protection capacity, its overall score was brought down by waste generation and greenhouse gas emissions.

Dan Esty, a professor at Yale University who created the index, said North Korea, Taiwan and Turkmenistan were the lowest-ranked countries as they faced many natural and man-made challenges and had poorly managed policy choices.

In contrast, "I was surprised by the relatively strong performance of the Latin American countries," he told a press conference here.

Uruguay ranked third highest in the index, behind Finland and Norway.

Esty put Latin America's overall strength down to lower industrialization that spared it many "pollution stresses" faced by the more developed nations, adding that "they also don't have the intense pressures of poverty that you see dragging down a number of countries in Asia and Africa."

He pointed to South Korea as among the most improved since the first index was published in 2002. *AFP*

Suicidal man charged with murder in LA train crash

GLENDALE, California—A suicidal man who later had a change of heart, jumping from his car just before it was struck by a train, has been charged with murder and may face the death penalty in the crash that killed 11 people and injured 183 others, officials said Thursday.

Authorities intend to seek 11 counts of murder against Juan Manuel Alvarez, 25, who was unhurt and taken into custody, Los Angeles County District Attorney Steve Cooley told US media.

"The Glendale police department did a remarkably good job collecting evidence that relates to connecting Mr. Alvarez to this offense and suggests his intentions to commit this offense by causing a train wreck. The facts are pretty self-evident to us," Cooley said.

Asked whether Alvarez intended to derail a train and kill other people, Cooley replied: "Well, the train's been derailed; it was his car that caused the derailment. He certainly intended to commit the act of train derailment.

"Under California law, committing that act alone, whether he intended to kill anyone on the train or not, can lead to murder charges," he said.

Eleven people were killed and 183 were injured Wednesday when two commuter trains slammed into each other in the Los Angeles area after the driver abandoned his car on the tracks, police said.

A murder investigation was launched as the death toll rose following the horrific early-morning crash involving three trains and a sport-utility vehicle in the heavily populated suburb of Glendale. *AFP*

Gay marriage comes from sick minds, says Sikh

AMRITSAR, India—The spiritual leader of India's Sikhs has appealed to Canadian Sikh MPs to "fight tooth and nail" a same-sex marriage bill to be presented in Canada's parliament shortly.

Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti, head priest of the Akal Takht, the Sikhs' highest temporal seat, urged them to stop such "antihuman tendencies," saying the idea of same sex wedlock "originates in sick minds."

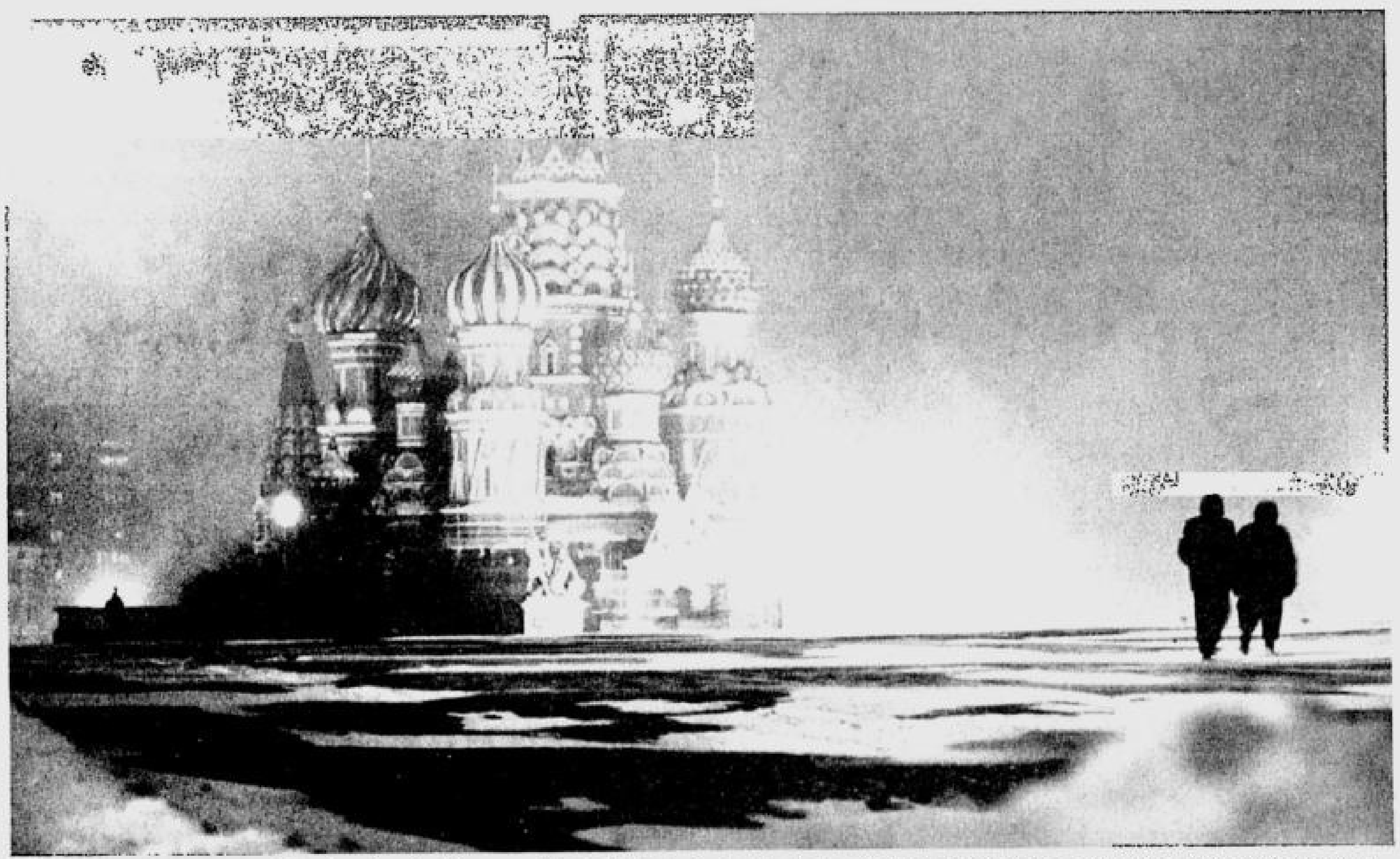
The Takht appealed to Canada's six Sikh parliamentarians—four from the ruling Liberal party and two from the opposition Conservatives—to strongly oppose same-sex wedlock.

"We do hope the Canadian Sikh MPS will take a firm stand in the House of Commons when the same sex marriage bill is presented and fight against it tooth and nail," Vedanti, who has spoken out earlier against same sex-marriages, said late Thursday.

Canada has a large Sikh community.

Last August, India's Sikh religious leaders were rattled when two Sikh lesbians in Punjab state declared they had 'wed' at a temple. Indian law forbids homosexuality.

Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin had been due to visit the holy Sikh city of Amritsar as part of a visit to India last week but the trip was scrapped when he shortened his visit due to the deadly tsunamis that lashed India's coastline in late December. *AFP*



RUSSIAN policemen guard the desolate Red Square with St. Basil Cathedral in the background, Jan. 27 as heavy snowfall descends over the Russian capital. AFP

Europe shivers as temperatures drop below freezing

WARSA—Europe shivered Thursday in a severe cold snap as temperatures hovered below freezing across much of the continent, forcing train and plane delays and ratcheting up electricity consumption to record levels.

In a ceremony marking the liberation 60 years ago of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, Poland world leaders stood in biting cold and softly falling snow pleading for the horrors of the Holocaust never to be forgotten.

Snow and sub-zero temperatures prevented new Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, who attended the Auschwitz ceremony, from flying to Brussels to introduce himself to European Union members. And the arrival in Poland of Russian President Vladimir Putin was delayed for nearly 20 hours due to bad weather.

Eastern and central Europe bore the brunt of the wintry weather, with snow and high winds buffeting Bosnia, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Poland as temperatures hovered around minus eight degrees Celsius in many areas.

In Romania, the pilot and co-pilot of a Hungarian mail plane were killed when the aircraft came down in heavy snow near the northeastern Romanian town of Iasi. Authorities had been weighing whether to shut the airport when the plane crashed on approach.

Road traffic all but stopped in central Croatia as snow depths reached 1.20 meters, breaking a record dating to 1954.

Wind gusts in Croatia hit 180 kph in some areas, as authorities shut down parts of the main north-south national highway to truck traffic.

Switzerland suffered its coldest day this winter with icy temperatures hitting minus 19 degrees Celsius in the western town of Aigle, the weather center said.

In the Czech Republic, snow continued to fall Thursday, further aggravating already poor travel conditions, with the mercury dropping to between minus five and minus 15 Celsius.

Power cuts hit several communities where snow of up to two meters was recorded. *AFP*

China may lessen use of death penalty

BEIJING—China may decide to narrow down the types of crimes for which the death penalty can be used, state media said Friday, in a move observers said was possibly designed to address European concerns.

China puts more people to death than the rest of the world combined, a fact that is a major obstacle to the lifting of a European arms embargo in place since the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

"In future amendments of the criminal law, the legislature might remove capital punishment as an option in punishing certain crimes," Vice Justice Minister Zhang Jun said, according to the Nanfang Daily.

Zhang's remarks were made public after days of wide-ranging debate in Chinese media about the merits of the death penalty, which is meted out for a range of violations, including non-violent ones.

"It can't be excluded that it is to please the European Union at a time when it is considering lifting the arms embargo," said Nicolas Becquelin, Hong Kong-based research director for Human Rights in China.

"It is likely to give a good argument for the people in favor of lifting the embargo," he said.

EU leaders declared in December their "political will" to lift the embargo, while stressing Beijing must respect human rights and regional stability.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said last week the weapons ban would likely be gone in six months. *AFP*

CHENEY

Expect to see more of Cheney on Capitol Hill, possibly abroad

By Deb Riechmann

KRAKOW, Poland—After years of globe-trotting in Air Force Two attending funerals of world leaders, George H.W. Bush once joked that the best tools for the job of vice president of the United States were a black hat and veil.

Nobody would make that suggestion to Dick Cheney, even in jest.

On Thursday, he was walking among dozens of heads of state at Auschwitz, commemorating 60 years since the liberation of the Nazi death camp. On Wednesday, he met for more than an hour with the new president of Ukraine and chatted with the president of Poland, a staunch ally in the war in Iraq.

No longer trying to help President George W. Bush get reelected, Cheney now has more time to represent the president overseas. He went to Afghanistan last month to attend the inauguration of Hamid Karzai, the first popularly elected president of the new democracy formed after US-led forces toppled the Taliban.

As Bush's second term begins, Cheney is also likely to spend more time on Capitol Hill, quietly lobbying for votes on Social Security, taxes and legal reforms.

He's a heartbeat away from being leader of the free world, but Cheney doesn't want the job—not even in 2008. That, combined with his loyalty to Bush, gives Cheney his power.

Paul Light, an expert on the vice presidency, calls Cheney the "vice president on steroids." Former Republican Sen. Alan Simpson describes Cheney as the "heat shield," taking the fire so Bush won't have to.

"He would take a bullet for the president," said Simpson, a friend of Cheney's for decades. "When they throw him in the hole, they'll have a big 'L' on his gravestone for loyalty."

The White House is focusing significant energy early in the second term to move legislation on items like simplifying the tax code and partially privatizing Social Security. The lame-duck syndrome that two-term presidents often catch midway through their second four years is one reason to try to get legislative traction now. Another is that Republican lawmakers need a slate of accomplishments on which to run their midterm campaigns.

Cheney is due back on US soil Friday, just days before Bush makes his State of the Union address, rolling out the legislative agenda that his second-in-command is charged with helping push through Congress.

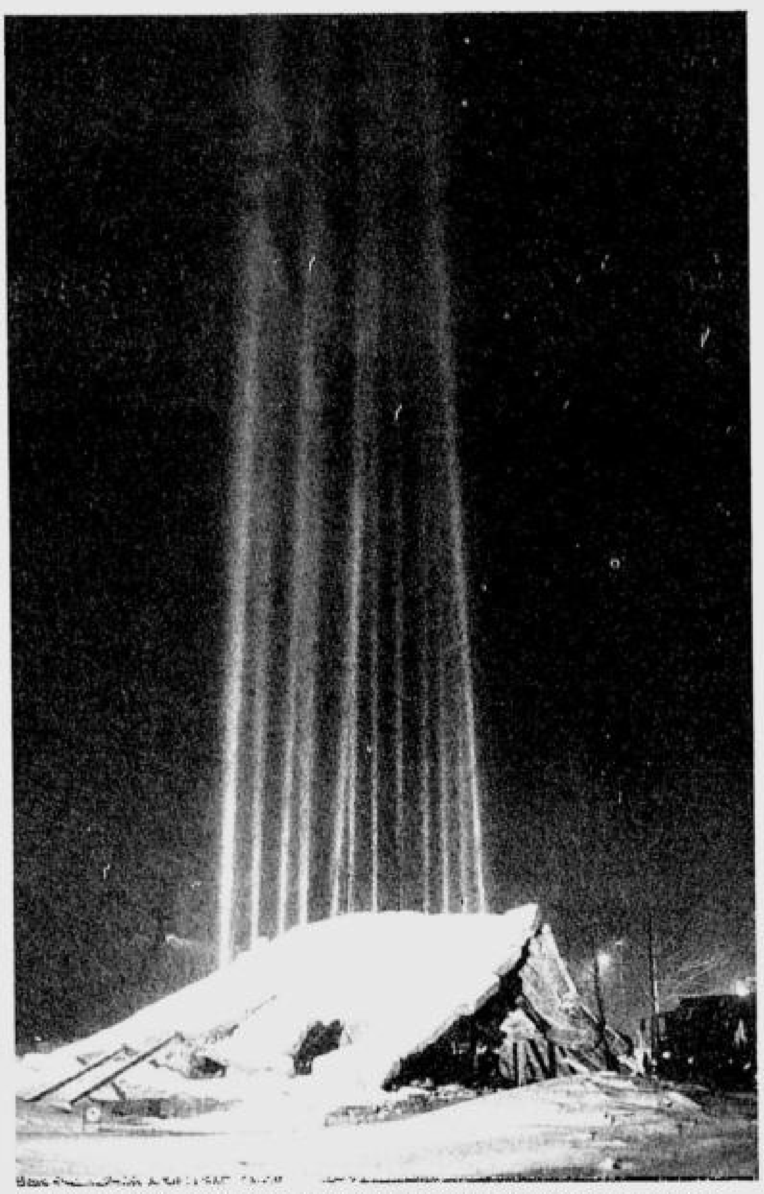
The emphasis on domestic matters, however, won't push foreign policy and national security matters off his desk. His friends say he'll probably watch election returns that will be coming in from Iraq on Sunday, his 64th birthday.

Light, a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, thinks Cheney's role will become more ceremonial and less influential during Chapter 2 of the Bush presidency. Bush has matured as a president and no longer needs to lean on Cheney's weighty resume, he said. Light also believes that the work of the second term will pivot on the administration's ability to reach compromises on domestic issues and exert a softer hand on the foreign stage.

"I'm not sure muscle is the answer, and you would never describe Cheney as a consensus-builder," Light said.

His aides, however, insist Cheney is not heavy-handed and is quite capable of finesse.

Cheney is a very serious guy. He reads books on military history and then more briefing papers, steeping himself in the intricacies of policymaking. *AP*



THE SKY is lit over the collapsed crematorium in the former Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jan. 27, near Oswiecim, Southern Poland, during the commemoration for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the German concentration camp Auschwitz by Soviet troops. AP

Auschwitz survivors remember horrors at liberation ceremony

By Bernard Osser

AUSCHWITZ, Poland—When the sound of a haunting train whistle pierced the winter air Thursday at the Auschwitz death camp, signaling the start of a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the camp's liberation, many of the survivors in attendance stiffened in their seats.

More than 60 years ago, they probably heard a similar long, sorrowful train whistle as they were shipped into the infamous Birkenau annex of the sprawling Auschwitz death complex, passing under the brick watchtower at the entrance to the camp along a train track that ended next to two gas chambers.

"I know that track by heart," said 84-year-old Alfons Walkiewiecz, who spent three and a half years at the death camp.

"I left seven ribs and a lung behind me at Auschwitz. It's hard to forget that," he said as he joined other survivors filing into the camp for the ceremony, which was held at the end of the train track where a stark black monument has been erected in memory of the camp's victims.

At least 1.1 million people died at Auschwitz, most of them Jews shipped into the camp for immediate extermination as Nazi Germany pressed ahead with its 'final solution' to wipe out Europe's 11 million Jews.

For the occasion of the ceremony, the infamous train tracks were adorned with candles that flickered eerily in the chill winter wind.

Candles also adorned the watchtowers and gun turrets around the camp, even the rubble of the gas chambers and crematoria.

To protect himself from the bitter January cold, Walkiewiecz wore a thick coat and a blue and white striped scarf—the colors of the flimsy uniforms prisoners wore at Auschwitz—marked with a red 'P,' which indicated his Polish nationality to his Nazi captors.

The organizers handed out thick woollen blankets to protect the elderly survivors from the cold as they sat at the foot of the outdoor Birkenau monument, which lies in between two gas chambers and crematoria the Nazis built at the camp to allow them to more efficiently exterminate those they considered Untermenschen (inferior beings).

Some 1,000 survivors sat under gently falling snow after the ceremony began and listened as former prisoners and world leaders addressed the gathering.

"It doesn't matter that there are a dozen or two dozen presidents or prime ministers here. What matters is that we were freed 60 years ago," said Leon Piotrowicz, another Pole who was imprisoned at the camp. *AFP*

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Jewish groups threaten to sue Vatican over missing WWII kids

WASHINGTON—US Jewish groups threatened legal action against the Vatican on Thursday, saying the Roman Catholic church has stonewalled their requests for information about Jewish children placed in convents during World War II to protect them from the Nazis.

David Schoen, an Alabama-based attorney, said Thursday that if the church does not agree to open up the records within a week, the Coalition of Jewish Concerns-Amcha would turn to the legal system for help in identifying the missing children.

Speaking to a news conference outside the Vatican's embassy, Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld noted the commemoration ceremony taking place in Poland to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

But, he said, "as long as the children of all those murdered at Auschwitz do not know their true identity, and as long as the murdered at Auschwitz have descendants who do know their true lineage, how can we truly say that Auschwitz has been liberated? We want our children back."

Herzfeld attempted to deliver a personal letter to the papal nuncio, Archbishop Gabriele Montalvo, requesting a meeting. He said his knocks on the embassy door were not answered.

A spokesperson for the nunciature said there was no comment on the Jewish group's demands.

The letter said the Jewish groups were "deeply concerned about recent documents indicating a papal policy of encouraging Jewish children who were hidden by convents during World War II not to be returned to Jewish institutions after the war."

Moreover, the letter said, in cases where the children were baptized, the documents' directive was to forbid the convent from returning the children to their parents.

It referred to a document found in French Roman Catholic archives that was published in the Italian newspaper Corriere de la Sera last December that apparently instructs French church authorities that Jewish children baptized as Catholics, for safety or other reasons, should remain within the church—even if that meant not returning them to their families once the Nazi occupation ended.

The letter is datelined from Paris and says it summarizes the views of the Vatican's Holy Office, the precursor to the current Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is not clear who wrote the document.

It notes that the contents were approved by Pope Pius XII, the controversial figure accused by some Jewish groups of not enough to prevent the Holocaust.

Last December Rev. Peter Gumpel, a Jesuit investigator promoting Pius' cause for sainthood denied that the letter came from any source in the Vatican. He suggested it might have been a brief, incomplete summary of the church's position by religious officials in France.

Herzfeld said the Jewish groups seek an immediate investigation of all archives related convents in northern Europe under the Vatican's influence in order to determine the blood lines of potentially thousands of missing children.

The groups also want an admission of wrongdoing by church leaders and a repudiation of the alleged policy. *AP*

HK's richest woman charged with forging dead husband's will

HONG KONG—Hong Kong's richest woman, Nina Wang, was charged with forgery on Friday in the latest twist in a long, bitter battle for her dead husband's billion-dollar estate.

Appearing in district court in a maroon Chinese-style jacket and black mini-skirt, the 66-year-old businesswoman was also charged with using a false will and trying to pervert the course of public justice.

No plea was taken. The court freed her on bail of HK$55 million ($7 million) and she was ordered to hand in her passport.

"This case has been pending for some time and there's nothing very new about it," said Brian Gilchrist, Nina's lawyer. "Today the time has come when Mrs. Wang has the opportunity to explain in court this case and to lead, eventually, we believe strongly to an acquittal."

Nina Wang's husband, Teddy, was a wealthy private property developer when he was kidnapped in 1990 and never seen again.

His wife and father have been embroiled in an acrimonious battle for his estate since he was declared legally dead in 1999.

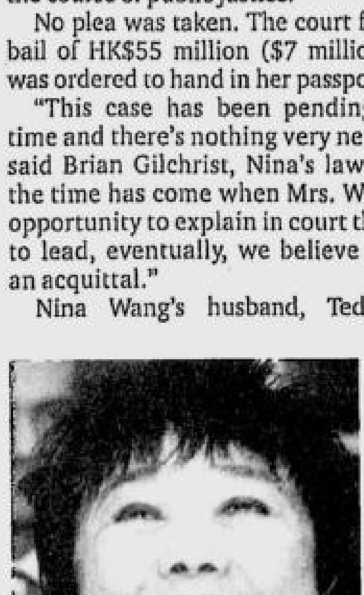
In 2002, a court awarded the fortune to Teddy's father, and said a handwritten 1990 will that purportedly left Nina her husband's entire estate had been forged.

The acrimonious case riveted Hong Kong with its accusations of sex, kidnapping and intrigue. During the probate hearing, the elder Wang accused Nina of having an affair, which had so annoyed her husband that he struck her out of his will in 1968, leaving his inheritance to his father.

Nina appealed soon afterwards, but her challenge was thrown out by a higher court in June last year.

The actual size of Teddy Wang's wealth is not known, but Nina could lose much of her fortune, which Forbes magazine estimated last year at $2.3 billion (HK$18 billion), if she has to give up his estate.

The next hearing in the case was set for March 23. *Reuters*



WANG leaving court after posting bail Jan. 28. REUTERS

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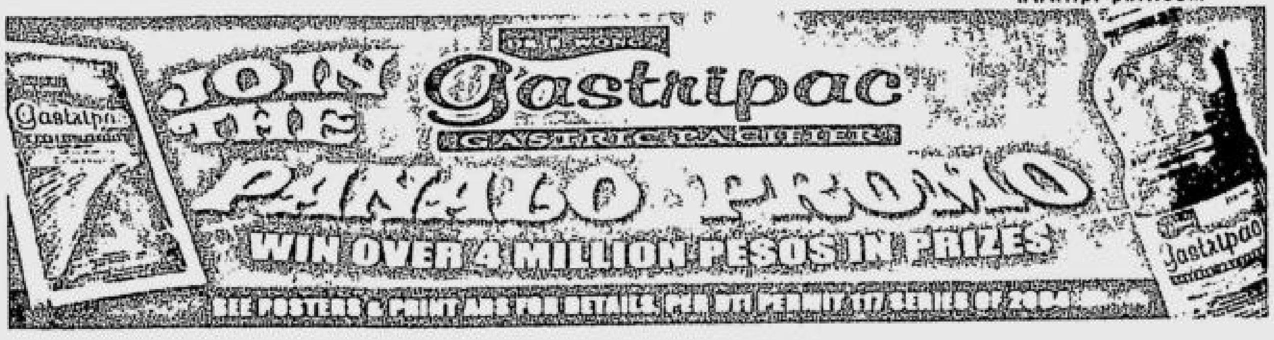

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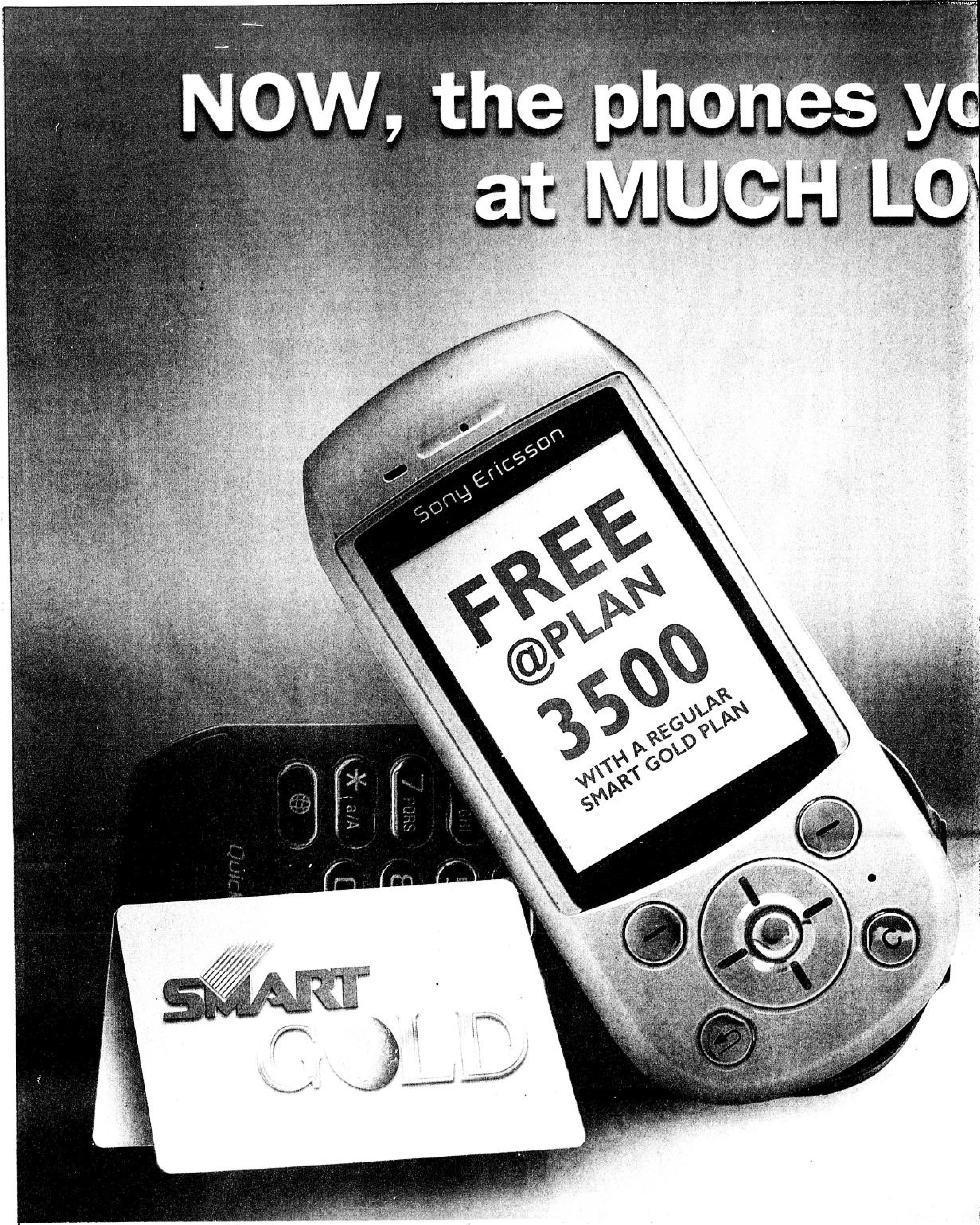

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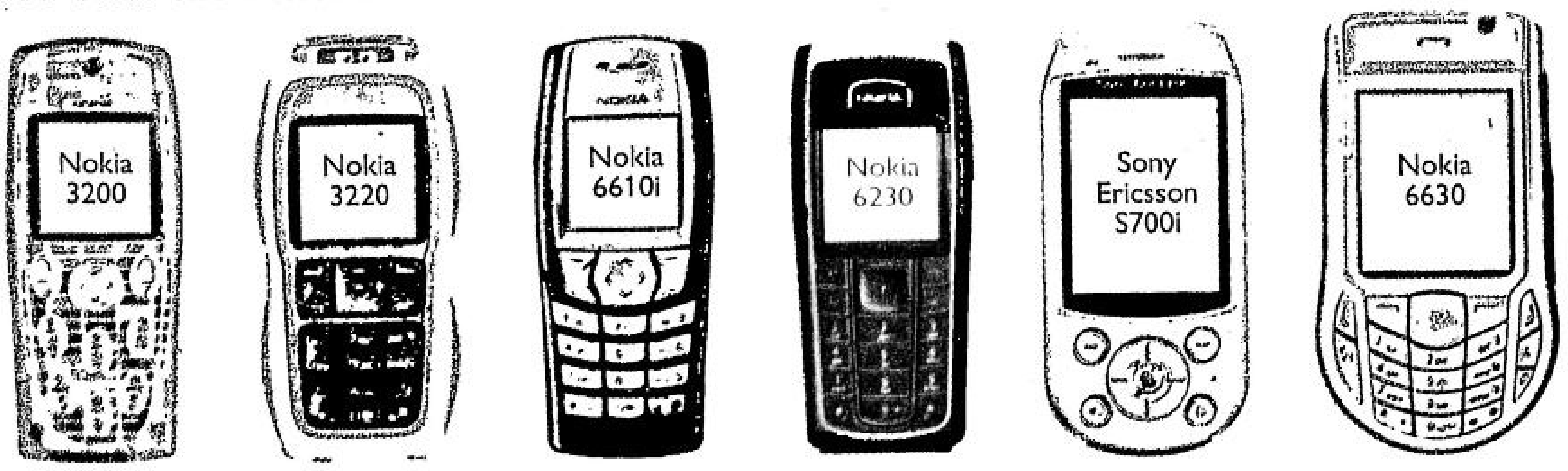

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OPINION

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Unfriendly act

EDITORIAL

THE UNITED States has traveled far from the days of Herbert Hoover, when US Secretary of State Henry Stimson shut down the cryptonalytic office (which was in charge of intercepting written intelligence), saying, "Gentlemen do not read each other's mail." As secretary of war to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Stimson presided over some of the most famous code-breaking efforts in the history of espionage, such as the breaking of the Japanese code "Purple." By the time Stimson retired, the United States, which established the Office of Strategic Service (precursor of the CIA) under his watch, ran one of the most efficient and vast spy networks in history.

Under President Harry Truman, who established the CIA, American intelligence efforts concentrated on two kinds of spying: the gathering of "humint" (human intelligence) and "elint" (electronic intelligence). With the development of spy satellite and jet planes, and the computer, Americans have gotten to increasingly rely on elint.

But as far back as the Reagan years, conservative critics of US intelligence methods, such as Donald Rumsfeld, increasingly felt that the CIA was devoting far too many resources to elint rather than humint—not least because of an executive order dating back to Gerald Ford making assassination illegal as a means of promoting American interests. There are fairly strict guarantees of congressional oversight on CIA activities which Rumsfeld and his allies feel are too tight. The CIA, in Rumsfeld's opinion, is "understaffed, slow-moving and risk-averse."

The result is the creation of a rival spy service directly under Rumsfeld, within the Department of Defense, exempt from congressional oversight and other requirements that, in his view, have turned the CIA into an overcareful and ineffective agency. The name of the new organization—Strategic Support Branch—betrays it as a throwback to the cloak-and-dagger and more ruthless days of the World War II OSS. "Designed to operate without detection and under the defense secretary's direct control," the Washington Post said, "the Strategic Support Branch deploys small teams of case officers, linguists, interrogators and technical specialists alongside newly empowered special operations forces," giving Rumsfeld the "full spectrum of humint operations."

The new agency has, according to American media, actually been in operation for two years now. The Post quotes Gen. Richard B. Myers, chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, as saying that the focus of the intelligence initiative is on "emerging target countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, Philippines and Georgia."

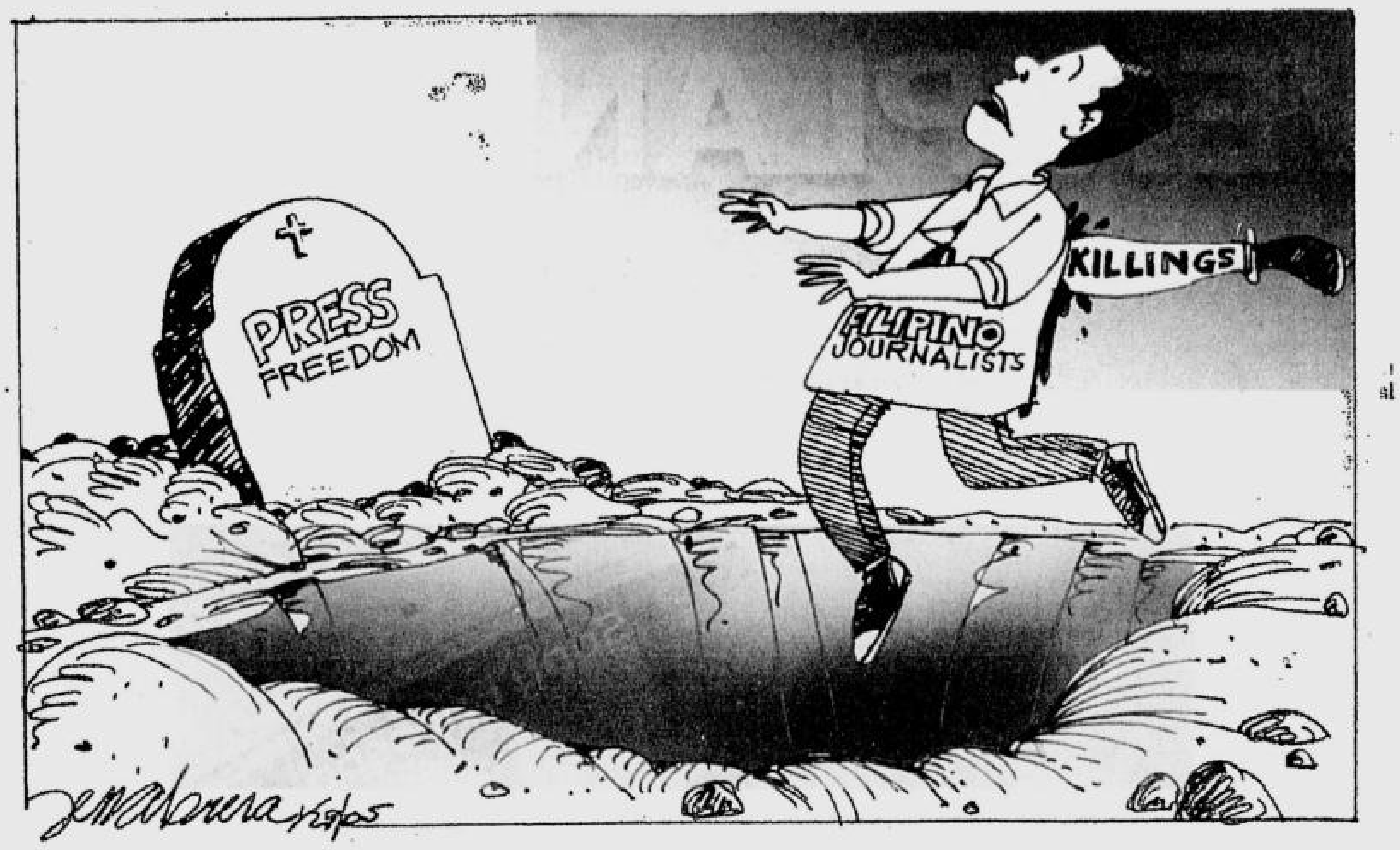
It is Rumsfeld's zest for undercover operations in nations not actually inside the theater of operations of US military forces, like the Philippines, that has caused great concern here at home. Filipinos are quite familiar with the controversial history of CIA operations in this country, particularly during the anti-Huk campaigns, when American success was so spectacular that they thought it could be duplicated in other places such as Vietnam (it couldn't).

Today the question facing Filipinos concerns the declared intent of the United States to engage in a new, lavishly funded and apparently risky espionage effort on a declared major ally, especially since the US Department of Defense has traditionally undertaken intelligence gathering in locations identified as war zones. Now, the entire planet seems to have become a war zone in Washington's eyes.

Where does the Philippine stand? And to what pressures—both official and unofficial, both traditionally sanctioned, such as parties and person-to-person talks, and unsanctioned, such as blackmail, bribery, and snooping on telecommunications and the mail—will Filipinos and their leaders be subjected to?

The country needs reassurance on this point. The United States has, time and again, punished with deportation or imprisonment, American and foreign nationals, whether from enemies such as the Soviet Union or allies such as Israel, caught engaging in espionage in US territory. All countries engage in espionage, but every country considers espionage aimed against it a crime deserving harsh punishment. Does the Philippine government intend to give the United States free rein to spy on Filipinos, and to an extent that goes beyond what is expected even of the CIA? Even more important, is such spying going to be done with the active assistance of the Philippine government or without its knowledge?

Sharing intelligence is what allies do. Spying without consulting or informing an ally is, to put it mildly, an extremely unfriendly act.



Allowed air raids

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

AT THE HEARING last week of the Senate committee on public welfare headed by Sen. Joker P. Arroyo, the personnel of the Department of Transportation and Communication attended in full force and crowded the spacious Padilla Room with Secretary Leandro Mendoza himself in attendance. Also present were Nilo C. Jatico, a retired general who replaced Adelberto Yap (also a general) as head of the Air Transportation Office. Their boss, Mendoza, is also a former general.

There were three representatives from Merville, Semito Alparce, Telesforo Tayko (a retired general, too) and Cesar Jota, to reiterate their complaints against the noise pollution being committed by the airplanes flying over their community and other areas with the permission or collusion of the ATO. They were heavily outnumbered but held their ground against the generals and in fact outpointed them.

When asked searching questions by the committee, particularly Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, about the offensive noise of the airplanes of Cebu Pacific and Air Philippines, Jatico was unable to answer satisfactorily or even to consult his technical staff, who did not volunteer any help to their befuddled general. This prompted the committee to suspend action on their budget until they could adequately rebut the complaints of Alparce's group.

The argument raised by Cebu Pacific that the residents have no reason to complain because they voluntarily chose to reside near the airport is a stupid answer. It is like saying that their passengers cannot complain if their airplanes should crash because people voluntarily run the risk of dying when they choose to fly.

Jatico now seeks to justify his office and himself and says, "contrary to (my) insinuations that the ATO is sitting on the problem and blatantly violating environmental regulations on noise pollution, this office, as early as 1999, has continuously and vigorously required the retro-fitting of airplanes with hush kits in compliance with Annex C of the International Civil Aviation Organization."

He says 55 percent of the DC-9 airplanes owned by Cebu Pacific ands 66 percent of the Boeing airplanes owned by Air Philippines have now been hush-kitted. That means that 45 and 34 percent of their respective aircraft have not yet been similarly equipped. Jatico says they started enforcing this requirement since 1999, six years ago, and yet they can expect full compliance with it only in 2006, still one year from now. That does not speak well of their efficiency or their strictness with the powerful airlines.

My question is, why are the airplanes that have not yet been hush-kitted allowed to fly just the same despite their non-compliance with the regulation? Non-compliance means violation, and yet Jatico's ATO allows these airplanes to fly with its blessings to the prejudice of the people residing in the communities below. Cebu Pacific justifies its violations "in the greater interest of the riding public" or is it in the greater interest of less expenses and more profit for it?

The higher interest is the comfort and convenience, and principally the health, of the people they are oppressing with their intrusive and injurious noisy airplanes. This is a case of Big Business v. The Little People, and ATO should know where its loyalty lies.

The objection of the offending airlines to the regulation is that the cost of the hush-kits at P1 million per unit will unduly reduce their profits. That is a cynical and inane argument that cannot be accepted in a welfare state. Businesses are entitled to a reasonable return of their investment but not at the expense of the public they are supposed to serve.

This is especially true of companies engaged in public transportation, which are legally described as businesses affected with public interest. They should be operated with the public interest as their primary objective and only collateral profit as their secondary purpose.

Alparce invited all interested parties to stay for at least one day in Merville so they can experience how its residents are oppressed by the intrusive airplanes with the permission, nay, connivance, of the ATO. Jatico cites the restrictions supposedly imposed by his office on the airlines and seems to be satisfied that he has done enough to solve our problem.

It's one thing to prohibit and another to enforce compliance. The ATO is not being followed; in fact, it is permissively ignored. They are only paper rules that Jatico invokes as if they were the Ten Commandments. Jatico cannot hear our complaints because he has been deafened by the noisy airplanes he is assiduously protecting. Or as the Good Book says, there are none so deaf as those who will not hear.

The generals in the DOTC, and particularly the ATO, should remember that they are no longer issuing commands to their enlisted men but are dealing with civilians who are not impressed by their military rank. It's about time that the civilian jobs they are bungling are transferred to responsible civilians who can perform their work better in promoting the greater public interest.

Choice between two evils

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

UNDER NORMAL circumstances, I would be at the forefront of those opposing the increase in the value-added tax from 10 percent to 12 percent, just as I was against expanding the coverage of the tax (E-VAT) to include services (the original VAT, which replaced sales taxes, covered only goods). I opposed the E-VAT (the only time Nene Guevara and I were on opposite sides of a tax issue), because, among other things, I reasoned that increasing coverage should be done only after the leakages from the original VAT—and there were many—were successful plugged. An E-VAT, with its added revenues, would reduce the pressure on the tax administrators to improve their collection efficiency.

I wasn't the only one who opposed the E-VAT—those who were going to be covered by the law put up a strong fight against it. And although the E-VAT was passed in 1994, the opposers obtained a temporary restraining order from a sympathetic judge in 1995, so its implementation was delayed until 1996. That success apparently signaled open sesame for all and sundry (except the ordinary citizen) to lobby for their own riders and exemptions.

And did they get it! Special laws were passed exempting many goods and services from paying VAT. A partial list of those exempted: Pagcor, Philippine Retirement Authority, GSIS, SSS, PTV-4, shipping—a list as long as an arm. It got so that even magazines were exempted, in the guise of "educational material," so that Tatler and Vanity Fair would fall under this category. What is more, certain services were able to obtain "postponements" in the E-VAT payments, including professionals (lawyers, doctors, accountants), not to mention athletes, actors and banks. For lawyers and doctors, the "postponement" ended up in an exemption last year, leaving contractors, CPAs, restaurants, beauty parlors, brokers, caterers, mechanics, etc.—the truly working classes—holding the bag.

In an effort to stop the hemorrhage by "rationalizing" the coverage of VAT and E-VAT, the I-VAT (for Improved VAT) was passed in 1997, but Guevara has a better description for it: D-VAT (for Deformed VAT). Deformed, because the structure became impregnable, with coverage narrowed down to those who were not politically strong enough to obtain exemptions or postponements—the ordinary citizen.

That is the current state of affairs, thanks to our legislators and the lobby groups who captured them.

Which is why, under normal circumstances, I would oppose increasing VAT—it perpetuates an inequitable structure, and the burden will be felt by too narrow a base, the law-abiding (as opposed to the law-evading and law-distorting) taxpayers who are caught in the net and will not, or cannot, get away. First, improve the structure by removing the exemptions, I would have said. A matter of sequencing.

But the circumstances are not normal. The country is still very much in the grip of a fiscal crisis. We cannot and should not take too much comfort from the influx of portfolio investments (coming in, among other things, to explore what profits can be made from buying and selling shares in mining companies) and the resulting appreciation of the peso. As fast as those dollars come in, they can go out, which is why they are called "hot money" and which is what precipitated the Asian financial crisis eight years ago. These are short-term respites. We are working on avoiding a collapse.

Congress has thus far exacerbated the situation, rather than helped it, because although it talks the talk, it has not walked the walk. It has been fumbling every opportunity thus far to improve the fiscal picture. Item: the pork barrel, which it refused to cut. Item: the Internal Revenue Allotment reductions that never came about. Item: a "sin tax" bill so watered down that the cost to the national government in potential revenues is at least P23 billion a year. Had Congress put the interests of the people above the interests of certain cigarette manufacturers, the need for an increase in VAT would not have been so imperative.

But that is, for the moment, crying over spilt milk. What is important to consider is that unless the government shows concrete and credible action toward improving its fiscal and financial picture, the crisis may end in collapse.

The increased VAT, warts and all, represents such concrete and credible action. So that, in the end, the situation boils down to a trade-off between the two evils: an increase in taxes that is unfair or inequitable, and burdensome to the good guys, or a collapse of the economy that is going to be even more burdensome to the good guys (just remember what happened in the aftermath of our 1983 debt crisis). The choice has to be for the first option.

Which is why I hope the Senate should not now add insult to injury to the Filipino people by beating its breast, proclaiming its championship of the poor, and refusing to pass that VAT. It has no moral high ground to stand on, because it was party to all the lost opportunities. It can, however, make up for its past failings by ensuring that the increased VAT is a temporary measure—lasting for, say, a maximum of three years—within which period it can remove all the exemptions it has given, look for better alternative sources of revenue, and (although this may be stretching it) even do the right thing on the "sin taxes."

Lift VAT exemption for lawyers and doctors

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE PAPERS said it very well: the battle over the proposal to increase the value-added tax to 12 percent from 10 will be fought over the exemptions. If the VAT increase, which hopes to bring in an additional P35 billion to government coffers, is to be made more palatable to the masses who will have to bear the increases in prices of foodstuffs, no matter how slight, the more affluent classes will have to bear the greater burden. I'm thinking specifically of the doctors and the lawyers, who are currently exempted from paying the VAT. It's estimated that the doctors as a class enjoy exemptions amounting to about P1 billion and the lawyers about P500 million. They ought to be paying the VAT.

* * *

From what I could gather, it was Senate ways and means committee chair Ralph Recto who argued for the doctors' exemption when the VAT law was being discussed. He said this would redound to the good of the common folk in terms of lower doctor's fees. But the lawyers also asked, "What about us?" And since Congress is dominated by lawyers, they got it. But if you ask me, both groups should not be exempted from the VAT, and happily many people, among them Senate President Franklin Drilon, share this sentiment. The lawyers, in fact, have less reason to be exempted, since very few among the poor avail themselves of their services. The *masa* will find the VAT increase more palatable if it's spread out equitably, especially among the more affluent.

* * *

With the House passing the VAT bill during a marathon session earlier this week, all eyes are now on the Senate. Drilon told this columnist that by Monday, the ways and means committee will start hearings on the VAT, in between the budget hearings which will be held every day from Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to "*sawa*." Sen. Serge Osmeña wants at least three or four hearings, which will mainly zero in on VAT exemptions. Among the thorniest exemptions are those enjoyed by the independent power producers (IPPs). The House, wanting to meet President Macapagal-Arroyo's "deadline," had decided to tackle the IPPs in a separate measure, to hasten the approval of the VAT bill. But Drilon says the sentiment in the Senate is to debate the IPP exemption once and for all.

* * *

The Senate chief has come out in favor of the VAT increase. He argued that while the poorer sectors would be affected due to the (hopefully slight) rise in prices of commodities they buy, it would still be better to tackle this issue now. He opined that the poor would be worse off if a full-blown fiscal crisis were to hit the country, since it would reduce the services that the poor now enjoy for free. The Palace maintains that the VAT increase is the only measure substantial enough to avert more credit rating downgrades.

* * *

But Drilon is fully aware that it will be a numbers game in his chamber. Sen. Joker Arroyo says he'll block its passage, hot on the trail of the VAT-exempted IPPs. Interestingly, Joker, the ardent nationalist, now finds himself on the same side as the American Chamber of Commerce, which opposes the VAT increase. But apparently AmCham members are not united, since Citibank approves of the measure.

Sen. Manny Villar was also reported to be against the VAT increases, but I suspect that, being an astute businessman, he knows there is no other way to save the economy but to pass the measure. What has to be done is to carefully scrutinize the exemptions so that the masses would feel that the tax burden is being spread out, and install safety nets to ease their burden.

* * *

At the observance of the 40th day after KC de Venecia's passing, held at the beautiful Vera Perez Gardens in Quezon City, we managed to chat briefly with Speaker Jose de Venecia in front of a lifesize photo of his 16-year-old daughter smiling broadly. JDV mused, "*Tingnan nyo, hindi ba ang ganda ni* KC." I said she was truly a 50-50 mix of him and Gina. Better tell that to Gina, said JDV, "as she always claims KC took her good looks from her." I said that when KC smiled, it's JDV one sees, and he countered, laughing, "She got even my big ears, which is why she always wore her hair long!"

* * *

When JDV can joke like that about his departed daughter, we know he's on the way to recovery. Lawyer Amado Valdez noted his natty suit and JDV said he had retrieved it from his Pangasinan residence after all his clothes were burned. "*Itong sapatos ko,* donated by my brother Tito," he said, adding that now he has six pairs.

Even in his grief, JDV is truly unsinkable, but I note that Gina is still deeply grieving. I learned that former President Cory Aquino has taken her to the Pink Sisters for much-needed regular spiritual therapy. Our prayers is that the Lord will give her the strength to bear her terrible loss.

* * *

Former President Fidel V. Ramos was "nominated" by Cagayan Rep. Constantino Jaraula for the post to be vacated in 2006 by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, but FVR said no thanks. If he really wanted it, he said, he would have worked for it even before he left the presidency. FVR would make a terrific UN chief, no doubt, since he has retained the international prestige he enjoyed as president and is still very active on the world stage.

At KC's 40th day, GMA asked FVR, "*O ano ang gagawin natin tungkol dyan?*" FVR just smiled and said he was too busy promoting RP. RP's gain is definitely the UN's loss, as JDV noted that evening. But JDV also said that as late as last August in Beijing, he himself turned down the endorsement of some Asian parliamentarians and instead pledged to support Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai. He said that the Philippines and the rest of Asean are already committed to Surakiart.

Urgent appeals

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

BY E-MAIL comes an urgent appeal in behalf of the women members of the Nagkakaisang Kababaihan ng Angeles City (Nagka), who find themselves embroiled in a "David and Goliath" struggle against the city government and Mayor Carmelo Lazatin.

Nagka is composed of women survivors of military prostitution and sexual exploitation who were dislocated by both the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo and the departure of the American forces from Clark Air Base. Around the time of the bases negotiations, Wedpro, an organization devoted to research, documentation and organization around women's issues, was commissioned to look into the situation of the women sex workers in the area and suggest means by which government could help them through the transition.

After the women were organized into Nagka in 1992, the Angeles city government decided to allocate a piece of public land then covered by lahar for use by the organization to help the women embark on income-generating activities.

The women put up stalls for eateries and shops in the area, but through the years, especially after the influx of foreigners who put up bars and entertainment places nearby, the humble stalls suddenly found themselves in the middle of a prime business property. This was when Nagka's troubles started.

Starting 1998, when the area became prime property, Nagka found itself having a harder time dealing with City Hall. "Every year, for so many years, they had to argue (with officials) why they should be allowed to continue," a backgrounder notes.

* * *

LAST year, Nagka joined dialogue-meetings with Lazatin, the City Council and barangay officials precisely to discuss the status of their occupation of the stalls.

Last November and December, unidentified men began to drop by the stalls, threatening and harassing the women stallholders. The dialogues continued until last Jan. 12. But even as the women were at the mayor's residence waiting for another dialogue, local government personnel showed up and announced a demolition, without benefit of a formal notice or order. When the women heard about it and informed the mayor, he supposedly remarked: "*Wala na akong pakialam* (I no longer care)."

With the help of Wedpro and other supporters, the women of Nagka approached national government offices for help, including the Office of the Vice President and the Commission on Human Rights, and through their intervention, succeeded in getting the mayor to issue a letter ordering the demolition of stalls to be held in abeyance pending further studies and the search for a relocation site. But just five days later, a demolition team of about 10 men started tearing down one of the stalls. When the Nagka officers showed them Lazatin's letter, they were even accused of creating a "forgery." The destruction of the rest of the stalls stopped only after barangay officials intervened.

* * *

FINDING their appeals to the mayor's goodwill unheeded (the councilors who had previously supported the women had slowly backed away), the women of Nagka went to court, with their counsel Evalyn Ursua filing a petition for a temporary restraining order against the continuance of the demolition. In the meantime, the demolition continued until most of the stalls were torn down.

Unfortunately, the local court declared that the issue was now a "fait accompli" since most of the structures had already been destroyed. An appeal was immediately filed and a decision is still awaited.

Meanwhile, the women have remained in the area, renaming their place "Nagka's Café by the Ruins," though despite their show of bravado, the women confess to living in fear for their safety.

"Fait accompli" it may be, but the destruction of Nagka's stalls for commercial development shouldn't be allowed to remain unchallenged or unpunished. Else, how will women who bought into government's promises of support and "rehabilitation" believe government's word again when it says it is looking after their interests?

* * *

ANOTHER urgent matter concerns the "survival" of 10 ancestral homes in the town of Baclayon, Bohol, each built around the turn of the century and cared for by the descendants of the original homeowners.

In a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo, representatives of the families appealed to the President to intervene in the plans of the Bohol provincial government to demolish their ancestral homes as part of the widening of the Baclayon coastal highway, which the houses border.

"In several dialogues with Gov. Erico Aumentado and after lodging with the authorities several letters of protest, we have been assured by the governor that a two-kilometer stretch east and west of the beautiful and historical church complex of Baclayon will be spared from the widening," the homeowners wrote the President.

And yet, despite these assurances, the Department of Public Works and Highways in Bohol indicated in a meeting with Baclayon residents that plans for the widening of the two-kilometer stretch of road would proceed. "If implemented, most of (our) houses will suffer partial or full demolition," the concerned homeowners write, while part of the church's belfry will be affected, too.

"We are not against development or modernization per se," the letter-writers state. What they are against is "destroying a major part of the tangible heritage that makes up the cultural identity of our community and town."

Achieving a happy middle ground is not all that impossible, the homeowners say. Officials need only look at the examples of Silay (in Negros Occidental) and Carcar (in Cebu) to realize how the past can continue to co-exist with the present and help shape the future.

Now for the good news

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

I THOUGHT I'd be nice to you guys for a change and talk about something positive, this being Saturday and all that, and who wants bad news on a weekend anyway? Think about a friend doing something positive for a change. In this case its Dr. Butch Zialcita who speaks 11 languages and is a sociologist and anthropologist to boot and has been in the business of heritage even before you and me, having written that stupendous book, "Ancestral Homes," with Sonny Tinio. (For the record, Sonny's got hundreds of photos of old houses all over the Philippines, which is a good thing because the way things are going it'll be a miracle if we manage to save even a couple).

Zialcita is a professor at the Ateneo and is conducting a class called "Culture and the Senses" for juniors and seniors. That such a course exists is a pleasant surprise and that there are students who would actually work toward a minor in cultural heritage might mean that the light in the tunnel might not always be a train.

Zialcita, in his syllabus, explains that Filipinos find it difficult to appreciate their cultural heritage due to the "growing homogenization and commodification of experience" in cooking, music, etc. A lot of people prefer what he describes as "mass-produced experiences." (The word may not necessarily be "prefer" but the fact is that few mothers have the time or the household help anymore to prepare a dish like *cocido* on a Sunday. It's simpler to just take the family out to lunch.) He also points out that we've been going around lamenting that "There is no Filipino cuisine; no Filipino architecture, no Filipino music, etc."

The rationale behind the course therefore is to introduce the student to "the language of the senses and to use this language to identify distinguishing features of the Filipino sensibility as manifested in music or dance or food,.and finally to apply the language of the senses in studying the heritage of a particular locale."

You must admit he has an interesting premise and, as one of the students admitted, "this course is fun," which after all is the best way to learn and a sincere compliment for a teacher.

Classes are divided into small groups, each tasked to examine the heritage of a particular locality of their choice according to each of the different senses. It could be in the city or in a nearby province. Each group is to write on a particular positive sight, sound, taste, smell and touch they would project if they were to promote the place.

There are four topics or sections starting with "Affirming Local Identity in a Globalizing World." Issues involved are the challenges we face in appreciating and affirming our identity, capitalism and its demands, homogenization and commodification in food, the arts, and education, etc.

Zialcita's lectures deal with subjects such as "What is Heritage?", "Challenges in Affirming Filipino Identity," "An Identity Under Question," and "The Devaluation of Non-Literary Texts."

The second part concerns the esthetic experience and a sense of play, or if you prefer, the esthetic experience as play and the union of reason and sensation, including looking at things in context and on a comparative basis. Gerald M. Hopkins' *haecceitas* and Charles Baudelaire's "correspondences between the senses" are used as reference. (Whether students grasp the idea in its entirety may not be as important as their introduction to Hopkins and Baudelaire. Aside from the usual English major or weirdos who actually read poetry, how many people would have copies of their poetry or know about them, given the present-day curriculum?)

The third portion is entitled "Rediscovering the Different Senses." The five senses are explored, analyzed and the grammar involved discussed. Perhaps a selling point might be the session with a professional masseur that compares Filipino massage with other forms of massage.

Vision is, of course, part of the course and the student is introduced to the language of art and the concepts of line, color, texture and composition. You may not end up with an aesthete but certainly you would have a child familiar with aspects of civility and urbanity. You might be wondering of what use this would be in earning a living. Let's just say you have to talk about other matters aside from the bottom line once in a while.

The sense of smell or scent is given special importance with a lecture by Pio Andrade, chemist and historian. Smelling sessions involve herbs, coffee, cigars and fragrances.

Then there's hearing where the class learns about sound, rhythm, melody, harmony and timbre. Prof. Felipe de Leon Jr. lectures on different sounds, music and instruments.

The sense of taste is where I came in, not to lecture but to eat at chef Gene Gonzalez's Café Isabel, where he spoke on the different dishes presented, what to look for and to make sure we sharpened our perceptions. Unfortunately, I may have ended up a gourmand rather than a gourmet, given the amount of food I consumed. This section on taste includes wine-tasting (for free, mind you) and beer sessions to compare local and foreign beers. There are also native wine sessions to compare which are meritorious and why.

The last part concerns aspects of Filipino sensibility, with the end in mind of integrating the senses and exploring the Tagalog vocabulary used to express them as well as understanding what underlying communalities link these characteristics together.

Now don't you wish you had a course like this when you were studying?

Looking at the stars

YOUNG BLOOD

Cecille C. Nepomuceno

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

"HI sis. How are u?"

"I'm broken-hearted."

"*Baket, sis? Ano nangyari?*"

"Won't u be? *Parang wala nang pag-asa ang Pinas. Ang mga pinoy, nagpupuntahan na lahat sa ibang bansa. Parang wala nang matitira dito.*"

"*Ano ba ang* unemployment rate *jan ngayon?*"

"I don't know. I mean, I don't care to know because I already can feel it."

"So frustrated *ka na? Makakahanap ka rin no.*"

"I just can't help but feel frustrated. You study hard in school, but when u graduate, u feel u have no choice."

"*Hay nako. Jan lang yan sa Pinas. Dito,* your diploma is your ticket."

I am 21, a fresh graduate, and I've been looking for a job for two months now. That chatmate of mine is a friend who emigrated two decades ago to the United States. He's an American citizen now. It's been a while since he last visited the Philippines. Many times he'd ask, "What's up?"

I'd answer, "Everything: oil prices, taxi and jeepney fares and in the MRT, the prices of meat, vegetables and groceries, etc., etc. It's the economy that's down—and me."

It's true what they say: When you graduate and enter the so-called "real world," you start to care about reality. I've never realized the effects of the countless problems facing this country until I started to look for work. I did not expect it to be this difficult. I have submitted a number of resumés to different companies, but no one seems to be interested in taking a chance on me. I graduated with flying colors from a prestigious school, but it seems that I have to pass through the eye of needle before I get a job.

Is my resumé too lousy? Or is it because I have no work experience? Or is it just that I haven't found the company that would best match my competency?

I don't know what to do now. A couple of call centers recently offered me the position of agent/representative. The salary was quite tempting. But it's just not the right kind of job for me. I had experience working in a call center before, and I think I discovered what it feels like to be a zombie.

What I want is put my education into practice in the media. I want to be in television to write romantic dialogues for a drama series. Writing scripts, that's what I would love to do.

They say that one would be more successful in life if he does what he loves to do. Still, I realize that not everyone gets the chance to do what they love to do because most people really have no choice. Many kids would love to go to school, but they don't have the means. Many college graduates like me probably hate working in the call centers as well but they end up there because they need money so they can help pay the household bills and support the schooling of their younger siblings. They have no choice, or no better choice.

Though I would want to sulk in disappointment over not landing a job immediately after graduation, I cannot. I am lucky after all. I went to a good school, my family manages to pay the bills and I do not have younger siblings to support. I have a choice. In this life, there will be some good or bad choices. But whether the choice is good or bad hardly matters at all. What matters is what you make of your choices.

No matter how heartbroken I may be right now, I know I will get over this soon, and I'm going to get that job I have always dreamed of. I'm gonna be a scriptwriter! That should be my mantra.

A quotation I hung on the wall near my bed says: "We may all be in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." Though this life sucks sometimes, I know I am always one of those who are looking at the stars, and I know I can reach them some day.

I hope my sharing somehow gives some encouragement to young people like me who feel down about not getting a job or the job they really want, and the many people heartbroken about the situation of our country. We will get over this... soon.

Cecille C. Nepomuceno, 21, is a BA broadcast communication graduate of the University of the Philippines, Diliman.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

THEY SAID

Idle vacations

"I believe we are wasting so much man-hours in idle vacations that consume but don't produce."

—Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., supporting a proposal to cut short Congress' break

Almost free

"They are already letting him go even if the case is not yet finished."

—Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, lamenting the Sandiganbayan's decision to allow former President Joseph Estrada to go to Hong Kong for a knee operation

Quick imitators

"We are a tremendously inventive nation. We are some of the quickest imitators in the world—if somebody comes up with a great idea somewhere else, we are very quick to pick it up and turn it into something successful."

—Adi Paters of South Africa's Department of Science and Innovations on his country's numerous anti-crime gadgets

Privileged criminals

"It will prove that in the Philippines big-time politicians get big-time privileges for their big-time crimes."

—Equal Justice for All Movement chair Leonard de Vera on the possibility of granting conditional pardon to convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos, a former congressman

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'Counterfeit' but as potent

NEAL Cruz seems to have missed half of the point when he decried the ploy of multinational drug companies to confuse "counterfeit" drugs with "fake" drugs. (PDI, 1/24/05)

While he is correct in questioning why medicines (of the same brand as those manufactured in the Philippines) imported by Philippine International Trading Corp. are called "counterfeit," he failed to pinpoint the real culprit for this—the existing law, Republic Act 8203 or the "Special Law on Counterfeit Drugs," which regards "unregistered imported drug products" as "counterfeit drugs." This means that even those medicines, which are legally manufactured abroad, genuine, safe, cheaper than—but as potent as—the medicines locally distributed, are considered "counterfeit," for as long they are not registered with the BFAD.

But, then, registering with the BFAD is not also a walk in the park. Legally speaking, the Intellectual Property System of the Philippines (RA 166 or the Trademark Law) actually prohibits the PITC from registering the imported medicines with the BFAD because once a brand name of a product has been registered as a trademark by a multinational drug company, then such brand name can no longer be registered by the PITC, lest there be an infringement of the multinational's right to the registered trademark.

If it's any consolation, Rep. Rey B. Aquino of Pampanga recently filed in Congress House Bill No. 2377 ("An Act lifting unregistered imported drug products from the classification of counterfeit drugs"). There is also a pending Supreme Court case questioning the constitutionality of RA 8203. Meantime, we can only hope that these legal measures—to rectify the confusing terminologies and remove the legal obstacles created by RA 8203—get the nod of Congress and the honorable justices of the high court.

—VICTOR B. ROQUE,
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NAPC's anti-poverty role

THIS is in reaction to an article published in the Jan. 20 issue of the INQUIRER, asking what the National Anti-Poverty Commission is doing to alleviate hunger, aside from "a soup kitchen relief-goods mentality."

For clarification purposes, the NAPC is the agency mandated by law to coordinate and oversee the government's anti-poverty efforts. As such, we do not implement programs.

It is government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the National Disaster Coordinating Council, that respond to crisis situations like hunger and disasters.

However, the entire government of President Macapagal-Arroyo is committed to long-term, sustainable programs that address poverty. "The basic task of the government's medium-term development plan for 2004-2010 is to fight poverty..."

For example, the inter-agency programs, "Food for School" and "Food for Work" include the use of available, idle lands of public schools and the communities for gardening/vegetable-raising by the Parents, Teachers and Community Associations (for "Food for School") and by the beneficiaries themselves (for "Food for Work").

Another example is the Department of Agriculture's program—"*Kabuhayan sa Gulayan*"—which assists poor families all over Metro Manila to grow vegetables in recycled containers, such as plastic cooking oil bottles and cans. These poor families now have additional sources of food, as well as sources of income from the sale of their backyard produce.

Entrepreneurial skills training and the provision of capital assistance for small businesses through micro-finance (which integrates value-formation in its lending process) are now part and parcel of the anti-poverty efforts of the government, whether in the cities or in the countryside.

Teaching the poor to be self-reliant, giving them the forum and mechanism in articulating and solving their own problems, educating them on how to budget and spend their money wisely, helping them evolve from dependents to empowered entrepreneurs and individuals, bringing them out of the cycle and threshold of poverty are the priorities of the government in partnership with civil society and the business sector.

This is because we all agree that the ultimate goal is not just to feed the hungry, but to give the hungry the capacity to feed themselves and for them to grow way beyond the survival mode—to enjoy the quality of life that all Filipinos so richly deserve.

—IMELDA M. NICOLAS,
secretary general
and lead convenor,
National Anti-Poverty Commission,
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Quezon City

A way to handle the Naia 3 issue

THE OPPOSING views expressed in Amando Doronila's "Misplaced concern" and Raul Pangalangan's "Naia taking: wise or simply 'wais'?" last Jan. 21 only show how difficult it would be to resolve the Naia 3 controversy.

The contract is grossly disadvantageous to the Filipino people. How could foreign investors confidently go into a contract that could be declared void because those representing the other party (government) are corrupt? With practically all major Philippine contracts being subjected to investigation because of corruption, are the contracts entered into by the government really transparent?

Forget about the view that declaring the Piatco contract void is a signal to foreign investors that the Philippine government is serious about corruption. It sent the opposite message. With the Philippines now second only to Bangladesh in corruption, the way the government is dealing with Piatco-Fraport reinforces this view.

I suggest that instead of using a high-handed approach, the government should let the international arbitration of the case run its course. This is the only way to maintain the Philippine government's credibility; anything less will further damage the already poor image of the Philippines.

—JESS DIAZ,
jess@diazlawyers.com

Outright lies

THE CHARGES of Rep. Loretta Ann P. Rosales—that Bayan Muna Rep. Satur C. Ocampo is particularly interested in becoming a member of the Marcos victims' compensation board; that the lawmakers criticizing the Marcos victims' bill are being dictated by outside forces and that they are out to block the bill—are deplorable fabrications. They are a desperate attempt to malign the character of Ocampo and to divert the issue from the serious defects of House Bill 3315.

We deem it necessary to give our side.

It is on record that Ocampo was the first one to waive any monetary claim due him as a martial law victim under the compensation bill (of which he is one of the authors). To accuse him of wanting to be a member of the board because of personal interests was, therefore, without logic. In fact, it was Rosales who early on refused to execute a written waiver for the purpose; she did so only because of public criticism.

But Rosales' biggest fault was when she discarded the proposed Marcos victims' compensation bill and sought to replace it with a generic compensation bill—as a compromise to the Marcos kin and cohorts who protested that the martial law regime was being singled out as human rights violators.

Rosales has forgotten that it was the martial law victims who arduously sought justice and made possible the recovery of $650 million of Marcos' ill-gotten wealth. Nothing in her bill states that the State takes cognizance of this fact and feat. This outright disregard of the hard-won victory of the more than 9,500 Filipinos who filed the case against the Marcoses is the most serious defect of HB 3315.

To make the victims undergo another tedious and traumatic process of applying and of being investigated and tried again by a compensation board would be harsh and unjust. They had already gone through a judicious process in their class action suit. Having proven their case against Marcos, they should be conclusively considered as martial law victims and, as such, compensable human rights victims.

There are three more serious flaws in HB 3315. These are: the unprincipled qualification of the peaceful exercise of civil and political rights for victims of torture and killings to deserve compensation; the blanket authority given to the president to choose members of the compensation board; and the period being covered by the bill.

Ocampo, Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela are not out to block the Marcos victims' compensation bill. They are intent on getting rid of the bill's serious defects and passing a law that will give justice and compensation to martial law victims the soonest.

—REYNALDO LESACA JR.,
chair, NATHANAEL S. SANTIAGO,
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Right medicine?

THE COLUMN, titled "Resign," of Conrad de Quiros is politically correct. (PDI 1/12/05) President Macapagal-Arroyo is the biggest stumbling block to unity. She is the problem and she should resign.

However, De Quiros failed to give the political alternative. To complete his political disquisition, it is submitted that after Ms Arroyo's resignation, a collective leadership should be installed. Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, former Senate President Jovito Salonga and former Supreme Court Justice Jose Feria are very qualified to be members of this body, which should rule under a revolutionary government. The leadership's primary purpose will be to save our economy and clean our electoral process. It will have a term of two years. This radical move is the right medicine to our present despondency.

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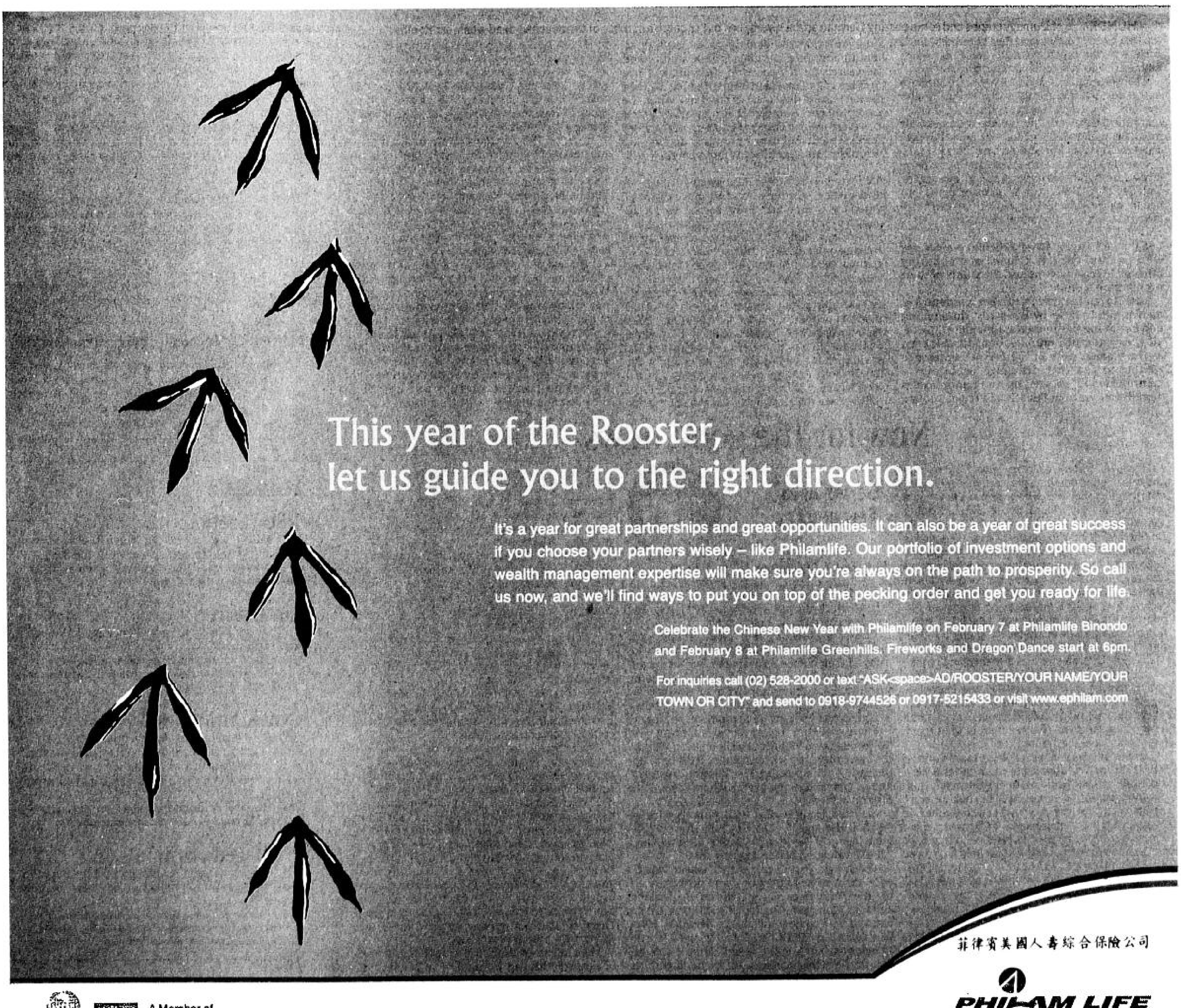
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2 traders jailed for shabu lab

CEBU CITY—Two Cebuano businessmen were jailed Thursday after they surrendered to authorities following the warrant of arrest issued by the court against them for their alleged involvement in the operation of a shabu laboratory uncovered in Mandaue City in September.

Andy Ng and Richard Ong, two of the five incorporators of the "Caps R Us" warehouse in Barangay Umapad, Mandaue City, were ordered arrested by the court on Monday after they were charged with the manufacture of shabu.

The three other incorporators—Ng's mother Asuzena, Ng's sister Athena and Ong's wife Adrienne—were also charged as co-principal accused of the 11 suspects who were arrested during the raid on Sept. 24, 2004, but the court has ordered the Department of Justice to provide additional pieces of evidence against them.

The Ngs and the Ongs, through their lawyers, had earlier said that they did not know that their warehouse, which they had rented out to several parties, was being used as a laboratory to manufacture shabu.

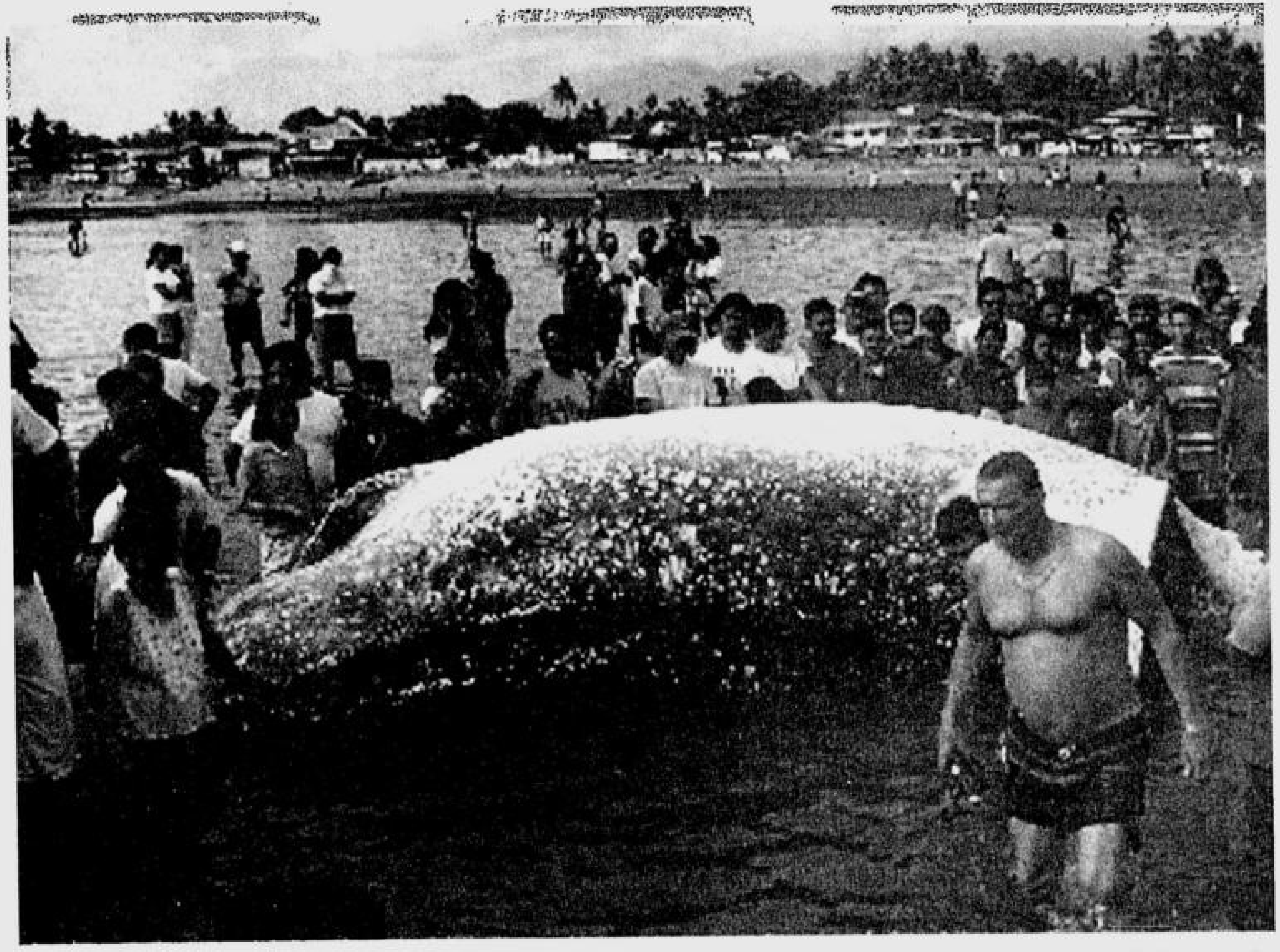
At least P1.4 billion worth of shabu was seized during the raid. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency said the Mandaue laboratory was one of the biggest in Asia.

Ng surrendered to the members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group on Wednesday at 11 a.m. on the prodding of his lawyers and family members.

Ng was presented to Mandaue City Regional Trial Court Judge Marilyn Yap who, in turn, issued the commitment order for him to be detained at the Mandaue City jail on Thursday.

Later that day, Ong, accompanied by his lawyers, also surrendered directly to Judge Yap.

Ong and Ng, who were both held at cell 19 of the Mandaue City jail, would not be given special treatment, assured jail warden Jose Moring. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*



HUNDREDS of Dumagueteños and some passing German scuba divers turn out to catch a glimpse of the beached dead whale shark off the beach of Barangay Piapi, Dumaguete City. *(See other picture on Page 1.)*

ALEX PAL/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

News of beached whale shark rouses Dumaguete

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—"Finally, I had a chance to touch a shark!" yelled student Joseph Solitario to a friend, after touching a beached whale shark that he mistook for a shark off the shores of Dumaguete City.

The sight of the enormous fish lying dead off the shore of Barangay Piapi greeted Dumagueteños who were up as early as 4 a.m.

The 9.3-meter female whale shark, estimated to weigh over 9 tons, was believed to have been dead for several days before it drifted into shallow water yesterday, as it was already starting to emit a foul odor.

News of its discovery spread through the morning radio newscasts which sent thousands of people wading in the knee-deep water, just to catch a glimpse of this unusual sea creature which was lying on its back.

"My, it's really big," gushed Emmanuel Tiongson, who rushed to the scene after hearing the news. "It's like a submarine!"

SPO4 Enriquieto Zendon, assistant station chief of the Dumaguete-based 702nd Maritime Police Station, said that in his 18 years in the Navy and 13 years with the maritime police, it was his first time to see a sea creature that big. He said he was not surprised that thousands of Dumagueteños turned out to see the whale shark. "We expected a huge crowd because many are amazed at this creature."

Lawton Alcala, a biologist of the Negros Oriental Environment and Natural Resources Division, said they still do not know what caused the whale shark's death.

Search for clues

"It would be interesting to see the whale shark's back because we might be able to get clues as to whether it was wounded or something," he said, but that was still not possible because the water was too shallow.

As of noon yesterday, authorities were still deciding what to do with the shark, although the Silliman University Marine Laboratory had expressed its intention to collect its bones for study.

Moonyeen Alava, deputy executive director of the Cebu-based Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation Inc., who is also the Philippine member of the shark specialist group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said whale sharks are migratory and have been known to pass through Philippine waters, especially in the Bohol Sea and in Sorsogon, which are plankton-rich feeding areas.

Whale sharks, considered to be the biggest fish in the world, could reach a length of 18 meters, weigh up to 15 tons and live for over 100 years.

It has a huge mouth that can be up to 4 feet wide.

The whale shark has distinctive light yellow markings (random stripes and dots) on its very thick, dark gray skin. Its skin can be up to 4 inches thick.

Poaching

"It's very rare that a whale shark, or any shark for that matter, will beach itself. It's possible that there might have been poaching activities in the area," Alava said.

She said sharks and other cartilaginous fishes are the longest-living creatures in the world, whose form and function has withstood evolution for millions of years.

Alava said that the presence of whale sharks is a strong indicator of the health of our seas. "When they are around, it means our oceans and waters are in good health."

Whale sharks have been traditionally hunted in the Philippines but have been nationally protected by Fisheries Administrative Order No. 193 passed in March 1998.

Efforts to protect the whale shark have also received a boost with the passage of Republic Act 8550, or the New Fisheries Code, also in 1998, which prohibits the international trade of whale sharks and other species listed in the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) list.

Vulnerable

The IUCN Red List includes the whale shark as a vulnerable species, but Alava said that Philippine data on the exploitation rate of the whale shark suggests that it would qualify as a critically endangered species in the Philippines using the IUCN Red List.

In 2002, whale sharks were listed in the CITES of Flora and Fauna. CITES is an international agreement between governments that aim to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

The CITES web site reported that not one species protected by CITES has become extinct as a result of trade since the convention was enforced in 1975. CITES is also among the largest conservation agreements in existence with 167 participating countries.

Cebu DENR men tell Defensor: 'We're innocent'

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Environment officers and personnel in Cebu have asked Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to reconsider his order suspending them for three months as they believed he was fed wrong information.

Fedencio Carreon, Cebu City's Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) head, did not hide his dismay and his frustration with Task Force Sagip Kalikasan head Alfonso Dagudag who allegedly gave false information to Defensor on Thursday morning when Defensor inspected the seized P4.5 million worth of smuggled lumber at the Mandaue City Port.

Carreon was among 21 personnel from Cenro and the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) in Cebu and Davao who were suspended for either allowing or failing to closely monitor the shipment.

But Carreon said that some of the 12 personnel from Cebu who were ordered suspended did not even take part in scaling or inspecting the shipment during and after its seizure on Monday evening.

One of the suspended personnel, Allan Durano, was on leave since Monday but he was still included in the suspension order, Carreon said.

Carreon said they all accepted the suspension order but he said they would ask for a reconsideration because "we are all innocent."

Carreon decried Dagudag's statements given to Defensor that local Department of Environment and Natural Resources people did not even help in the unloading and scaling of the lumber.

Carreon said Dagudag had told Defensor that the members of his task force were the ones who unloaded the shipment from the barge and scaled the lumber when it was personnel from Cebu's Cenro and Penro who worked overtime from Tuesday evening until 3 a.m. on Thursday to document the seized shipment.

Carreon admitted he failed to immediately hire a crane or payloader to unload the lumber from LCM Condor, the barge that transported the lumber from Davao City to Cebu, but it was only because they had no money at that time to rent the equipment.

Carreon said Dagudag's team arrived later on Tuesday from Manila and they tried to hire a crane but the crane operator refused because the equipment could not get inside the barge.

He said they later agreed to manually unload the seized lumber. Carreon said Dagudag's team recruited port workers for the unloading while the Cenro and Penro personnel conducted the scaling.

Village elections postponed until '08

BAGUIO CITY—The House of Representatives has approved the postponement of the 2005 barangay elections until May 2008 and has started drafting a resolution to allow barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials to install acting officers once the terms of current officials expire.

On Friday, Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan, vice chair of the House committee on government reorganization, said the postponement would allow the government to save P2 billion.

He said House leaders appointed him, Makati City Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Iloilo Rep. Raul Gonzalez Jr. to resolve the "more controversial issue" on barangay and SK officials who have holdover positions in local town councils as ex-officio members.

Domogan said their consensus is to adopt the specific Association of Barangay Captains and SK charter provisions about selecting interim replacements without undergoing general elections.

President Macapagal-Arroyo endorsed the new barangay poll schedule in September, days after local government organizations like the League of Provinces in the Philippines made similar proposals.

But Domogan said representatives are relying on amendments to the Local Government Code to solve the budget deficit. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Traders urge tax holiday in meningo wake

BAGUIO CITY—What's the true economic cost of Baguio's meningococcemia crisis?

That's the new controversy plaguing City Hall today, after businesses demanded this week a tax holiday covering the months when "praningococcemia (the phrase coined to describe the paranoia of people against Baguio residents)" hit the city.

The Baguio Association of Hotels and Inns (Bahai) and the Baguio Market Vendors Association (Bamarva) have staked their claim to "meningo-derived bankruptcy" to seek a cut in their business renewal taxes, the INQUIRER learned on Wednesday.

Janine McCann-Chan, Bahai president, in her letter to Mayor Braulio Yaranon on Jan. 10, said Baguio tourism had slid down by 75 percent due to the disease.

But Pablito Gumnad, a Bamarva official, said Yaranon should give more attention to the plight of city market vendors.

On Dec. 29, 2004, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit identified the city market as the primary source of meningococcemia contamination, causing trade there to plunge by as low as 80 percent, Gumnad said.

City officials have yet to respond.

Yaranon last week announced in a press conference that tax collections for January would be based on last year's collection levels to help businessmen hit hardest by meningococcemia.

However, Gumnad said the city treasury continued to collect higher taxes from vendors. "How can that happen? Why is Yaranon not in control?" Gumnad asked.

A city treasury official said the city government could ill afford to cut taxes in January because it had instituted new health projects in response to the meningococcemia crisis.

Treasury office records showed the city government budget for 2005 required it to collect over P100 million. The Department of Finance and the Bureau of Local Government Finance have also issued the Baguio treasury a 2005 collection target of P140 million.

"The city economy is healthy, so we need to be scientific in asserting losses. Besides, we contend that the hysteria over meningococcemia occurred only toward the end of 2004, so they cannot claim losses for March or October when [the meningococcemia panic] occurred only in the third week of December [or the first weeks of] January," an INQUIRER source from the treasury office said. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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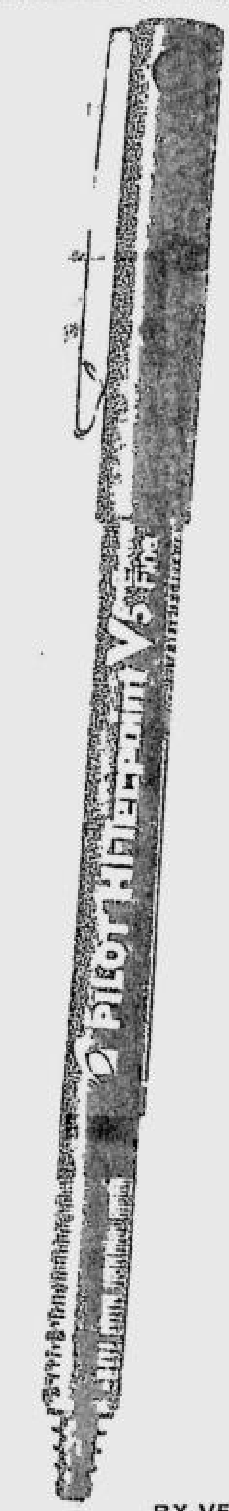

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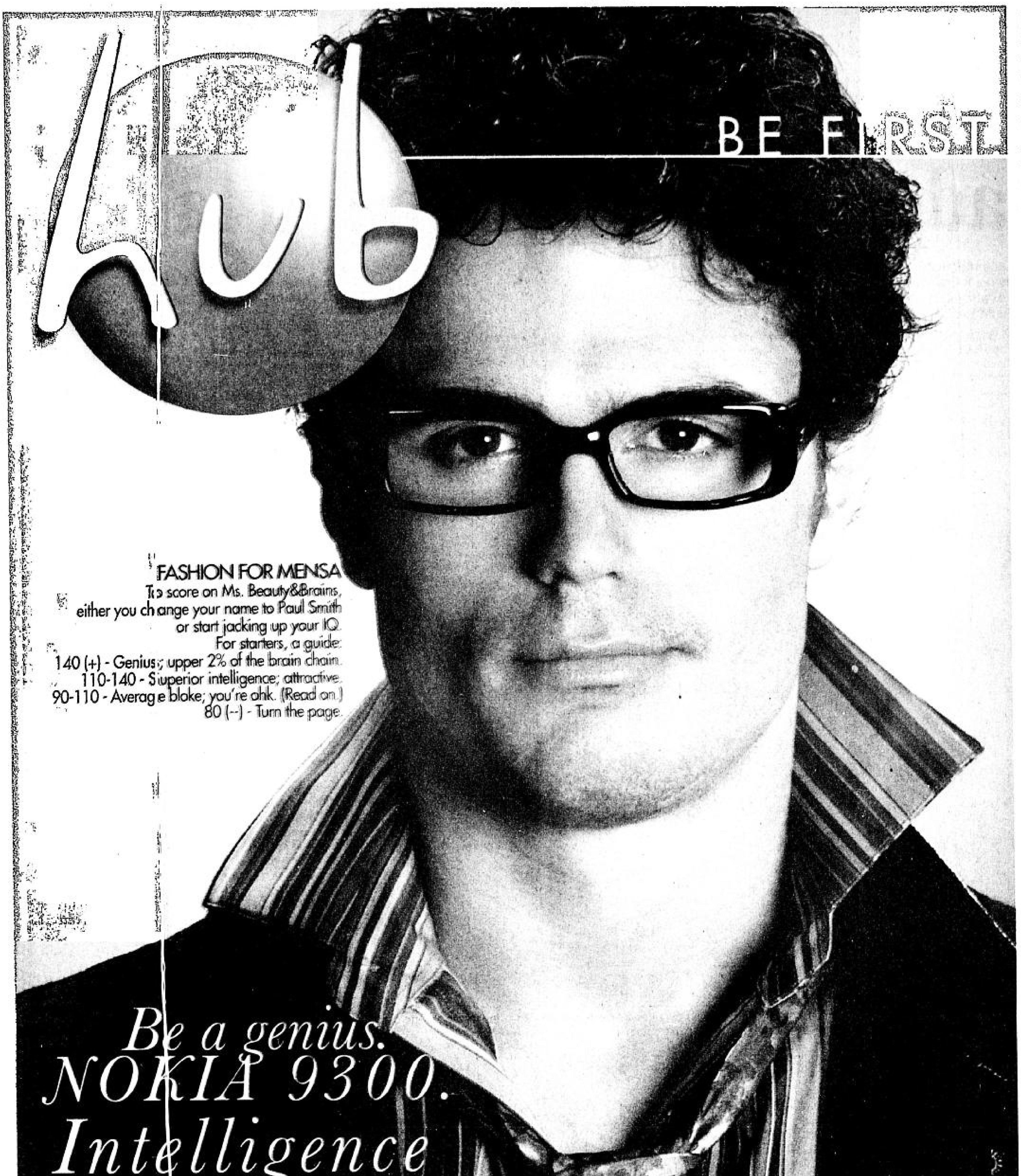

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Pro-VAT solons warned of poll demise

LUCENA CITY—Members of Congress who voted to approve the 2-percent hike in the value-added tax face rejection by the people in the 2007 elections, the militant fisherfolk alliance Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas said.

"Those who are planning to seek another term in the 2007 national elections will face the ultimate rejection of the electorate. This is their reward for betraying the ... interest ... of the people," said Pamalakaya national chair Fernando Hicap in a press statement.

Hicap called the newly approved VAT hike as "a national crime" against the people.

Approved by a 126-11 vote with no abstention, the legislation aims to raise the VAT rate from the present 10 percent to 12 percent.

The bill's proponent argued that the measure would provide additional P34.9 billion for the cash-strapped government.

Hicap said Pamalakaya's first step would be to expose the identities of the 126 lawmakers who voted for the approval of the bill.

"Let them suffer wholesale condemnation for betraying the people's interest and welfare. Pro-VAT legislators cannot use their legislative immunity to stop us from frustrating their respective political bids in 2007," he said.

Hicap said the VAT hike is a non-negotiable issue to the "downtrodden and marginalized." *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Senator vows to oppose P36-B rail plan

ROXAS CITY—Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II reiterated his opposition to the plan to revive and rehabilitate the Panay Railways, as this would just be another white elephant.

"I already studied this... This would be another white elephant project once pursued," said Roxas, who went to his home province to attend the Dinagyang Festival.

He said the public would suffer because they would have to pay for the high cost of materials.

Roxas said reviving the Panay Railways is impractical as it would make transportation of goods more expensive.

He said there will be a "triple handling" of products brought in by the train—from the farms to the train station and to the market.

Roxas said the amount to be spent on the project should instead be used for roads and highways.

Nick Rivas, National Economic Development Authority specialist, said the 120-km railway connecting Capiz and Iloilo will cost P36.8 billion, nine times the cost of an airport of international standards. *Felipe Celino, PDI Visayas Bureau*

De Oro dads say power contract 'onerous'

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The city council has accused the Cagayan de Oro Electric Power and Light Co. (Cepalco) and the independent power producer (IPP) Minergy of entering into an onerous deal.

Cepalco contracted Minergy to supply power in the event of power outages.

The councilors grilled David Taule, the senior vice president of Cepalco, after he presented the electric purchase agreement between Cepalco and Minergy during the council session this week.

Cepalco has passed on to its consumers expensive power rates due to its obligation to pay Minergy an average of P19.6 million per month in 15 years.

The agreement was inked in 1992 and will expire in 2007.

Vice Mayor Michelle Tagarda-Spiers said the contract between Cepalco and Minergy is onerous on the basis of the "off-take" provision, which is stipulated in Section 2.2 of the contract.

"We have been paying a fixed or a guarantee fee through this 'off-take' provision, amid the absence of the use of the standby power which Minergy is supposed to supply when there are power outages," she said.

Councilor Benjo Benaldo, chair of the city council's energy committee and president of the Mindanao Power Bloc, accused Cepalco of duping the consumers.

The Mindanao Power Bloc is an organization of various local government units in Mindanao protesting onerous deals between power providers and the IPPs.

Benaldo said his committee would file a resolution seeking an ERC review and possible amendment of the contract.

He said he hoped the off-take provision could be removed because it was hurting consumers.

Taule admitted that Cepalco could not avoid power rate increases since Minergy runs a diesel plant.

Taule also blamed the price increases on the world market. *Grace Cantal-Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Radio engineer slain in Baguio

BAGUIO CITY—A technician of the Radyo ng Bayan dzEQ here was shot and killed Wednesday night during his 38th birthday celebration at the Baguio Botanical Gardens, a few meters from the radio station.

Police said Roel Villafuerte, an engineering technician, was shot outside his white Kia Pride at about 11:10 p.m.

A single bullet wound in the back of his ear caused his death, according to SPO3 Eddie Ocampo of the Baguio police.

There was no sign of robbery as his wallet and cellular phone were intact, Ocampo said.

Jing Flor, a dzEQ announcer and Villafuerte's close friend, said the victim had no perceived enemies in work and outside of the radio station.

Villafuerte, a father of three, was a preacher of the Iglesia ni Kristo. He had been with Radyo ng Bayan for 14 years, Flor said. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ARMY RECOMMENDATION

Ethics probe of Luisita 'agitators' urged

SUPPORTERS of workers at the Hacienda Luisita create noise at Gate 1 of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac to urge the workers to defy a return-to-work order of the labor department.

REM ZAMORA

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—A military official on Friday asked the police to pursue the Armed Forces of the Philippines' recommendation to bring four party-list representatives before the House ethics committee for allegedly inciting Hacienda Luisita workers to continue with their strike.

In a press briefing on Friday, Col. Gregorio Catapang, operations chief of the military's Northern Luzon Command, identified the legislators as Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis and Liza Maza of Gabriela.

"They should be referred to the ethics committee because instead of upholding the law as they are sworn to do, they incite workers to violate it in pursuit of their rights," Catapang said.

He said the military has no legal personality to pursue the recommendation because the Department of Labor and Employment has deputized the police, not the military, to implement the return-to-work order on striking workers.

Catapang made the remarks after citing several occasions where the four representatives either spoke in rallies or met labor leaders together with "underground personalities."

Ocampo, however, said the military's accusations should not be dignified by any member of Congress as these were "pure and simple black propaganda."

"The Armed Forces has no business in interfering in the internal affairs of Congress," he told the INQUIRER.

"It's a malicious attempt to cover up the [military's and the police's] responsibility in the Luisita massacre," Ocampo said, referring to the Nov. 16 dispersal where seven workers were killed.

In his presentation, Catapang stressed the roles of the lawmakers in the supposed overall leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, over the labor dispute, which is now on its third month.

"The strike is the culmination of long months of instigation," Catapang said.

He said the purported orchestration of the strike by leftist groups, party-list organizations, the CPP and the NPA were confirmed in documents seized in encounters between Army soldiers and communist rebels in October 2004. The list that Catapang showed included Tarlac local officials.

The NPA, he said, had sent hit squads in villages around the Cojuangco family-owned sugar mill as early as October and consolidated these into platoon-sized formations to secure the striking workers.

He said one of those slain in the Nov. 16 dispersal, whom he identified as Jun David, was an NPA rebel.

Catapang's recommendation was contained in the final report of the police team investigating the Luisita dispersal.

In a 27-page report, the team, chaired by Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco said: "The propriety of the presence, participation and conduct of [Ocampo, Mariano and Casiño] shall be referred to the committee on ethics, House of Representatives."

The team said the legislators "made statements and pronouncements ... that inflamed the emotions of the strikers..." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Public warned of new scam using cell phones

SORSOGON CITY—Police have alerted the public about a new modus operandi being employed by swindlers using mobile phones.

The alarm was issued by the Sorsogon City police office after two residents were duped of P58,000 by a man who introduced himself to them as the ambassador of the Philippines to London.

City police Chief Supt. Saadra Gani said the syndicate using a new modus operandi apparently targets families who have relatives abroad.

Gani quoted one of the victims as saying she received a call from a man who informed her that her son figured in an accident in London and badly needs financial help.

The victim was advised to immediately send money to a particular person through money transfer. Anxious and worried, the victim rushed to send the money totally oblivious of the ploy.

One of the recent victims, Delia Ignacio, said she received a call from one Rogelio de Guzman who introduced himself as the country's ambassador to London and informed her that her sister, who is in London working as a nurse, accidentally injured her pregnant patient and was being hunted by authorities there to face prosecution. The caller said embassy personnel were quick enough to help and were able to spirit her sister out of London.

At the time of the call, De Guzman told Delia that her sister was already in Baguio City hiding accompanied by an embassy personnel. The caller said her sister could not contact them just yet lest they be traced by authorities.

The caller asked her to send P200,000. It would supposedly cover reimbursement of the air fare and other expenses incurred in helping her escape.

Delia told the caller that all she had at the moment was P8,000 in cash. She was instructed to send the money immediately to a certain Mylene Sollano, the embassy personnel accompanying her sister, because they had no more money.

Delia said her fear heightened when she was not able to contact her sister. She sent the money through Smart Money Padala on instruction of the caller.

She only realized that she was duped after she was able to talk to her sister's friend who was also working in London and who told her that she was perfectly well.

A similar story was narrated to INQUIRER by a retired teacher who was duped of P50,000.

Purificacion Villamor has a daughter working as nurse in London and she, too, received a call from the same man who introduced himself as an embassy official. *Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Status quo declared in Cotabato mayoral row

COTABATO CITY—Mayor Muslimin Sema continues to wield power after the Commission on Elections en banc voted 3-3-1 to declare status quo in the mayoral conflict here between Sema and rival Estrellita Juliano.

"There was a tie—three votes for Sema and same number of votes for Juliano with one abstention. This means Sema has to remain in his post," said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday of the latest resolution on the Sema-Juliano case.

Juliano, who vowed to bring the case to the Supreme Court, has raised suspicion that the en banc ruling had been laced with "bribe money."

She said the decision of the Comelec prompted her to believe reports that the incumbent mayor bribed poll officials.

"I suspect that the four commissioners were recipients of bribe money," said Juliano, adding that, "in due time, we will know the truth about it."

The seven commissioners, led by Abalos, had no comment on Juliano's allegation.

Sema laughed off Juliano's accusation as an act of desperation.

"Not a single centavo," the mayor said.

Upon his directive, City Treasurer Cleotilde San Luis and City Accountant Primitivo Glemada Jr. issued affidavits indicating the incumbent mayor has not incurred cash advances amounting to P30 million in December 2004 and another P2.1 million this month as alleged by some groups, believed to be Sema's detractors.

Abalos said Juliano could have reversed the decision of the three-man Comelec second division chaired by Commissioner Mehol Sadain if the four remaining votes were in her favor.

Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano abstained, Abalos said without elaborating on the abstention.

Sema thanked the Comelec, saying the decision was a vindication of his victory.

Sema earlier ordered the closure of a cable TV provider firm owned by Juliano.

Sema said Maguindanao Sky Cable, of which Juliano is the major stockholder, had violated a city ordinance for allegedly showing pornographic shows on its community channel 22.

Juliano dismissed the charges as politically motivated, saying none of his subscribers ever complained and that the local government has no jurisdiction to issue a closure order.

Juliano said the closure order was part of attempts to sabotage her election protest.

But Sema said his order had nothing to do with politics. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Comelec-declared mayor takes over Bohol town

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

BATUAN, Bohol—There was no fanfare when Sixto Dano entered the mayor's office at 3:43 p.m. yesterday, three days after he was proclaimed mayor of this town.

There was also no sign of unseated mayor Gregoria Dampog-Pepito when Gov. Erico Aumentado installed Dano, 45, as mayor of Batuan town in a brief ceremony lasting less than four minutes.

But a town employee confirmed that she called chiefs of offices on Wednesday to thank them for their help during her brief tenure.

"She also bade goodbye," the employee, who declined to be identified, said.

Dano's assumption was an anticlimactic finale to the tug-of-war between him and Pepito after he was declared mayor at the Comelec provincial office in Tagbilaran on Monday.

There were no signs of the placards that were in front of the town hall by Pepito's supporters in the last two days.

Placards like "Comelec For Sale" and "Let the People Decide" were left behind by Pepito supporters but Dano ordered town employees to clean them up yesterday.

Casual workers who were hired by Pepito were seen at the town hall but slowly left after 2 p.m. yesterday when there was no sign of their beleaguered leader.

Dano was proclaimed mayor of Batuan on Monday after the Commission on Elections en banc affirmed its resolution that Pepito was not qualified to run for mayor in the May 2004 elections because she lacked the residency requirement.

Pepito initially refused to step down while her lawyers in Manila filed a petition, asking the high tribunal to issue a restraining order.

Her office said she would continue to serve the town in a private capacity. Pepito is a nurse.

Aumentado gave her 48 hours to secure a temporary restraining order but the 48 hours lapsed yesterday afternoon.

He said the installation was "without prejudice to the result of any judicial process."

In accepting the post, Dano reiterated his support to the government including Aumentado and President-Macapagal-Arroyo.

Dano was mayor of Batuan since 1998. But he relinquished his post last year when Pepito won in the last elections only to regain it 208 days later.

Prior to the governor's arrival in Batuan, Dano merely smiled when asked if there would be a program for his installation.

"There is no need," he said.

Dano also said he did not expect Pepito to organize a program for the event.

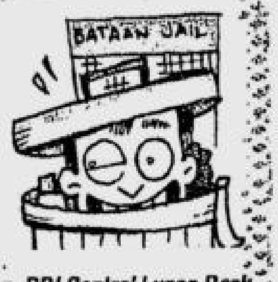
ROUNDUP

New Cabanatuan bishop

CABANATUAN CITY—Rev. Sofronio Bancud was installed Tuesday as the fifth residential bishop of the Diocese of Cabanatuan in ceremonies held at the St. Nicholas of Tolentine Cathedral here. Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Antonio Franco officiated the installation rites, assisted by 37 bishops from the different dioceses. Bancud, a native of Tuguegarao, Cagayan, was formerly auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Cabanatuan. He succeeded the late Bishop Sofio Balce.

Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Prisoner escapes



BALANGA CITY—A prisoner at the Bataan provincial jail escaped on Monday by posing as one of the men collecting garbage from the jailhouse. Rodolfo de Mesa, provincial administrator, was investigating the escape of Ricky de Vera, 31.

Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Driver shot in Davao

DAVAO CITY—A 33-year-old taxi driver was shot by motorcycle-riding men on Durian Street, Juna Subdivision, Matina here on Jan. 19. Joel Castro has become the 27th victim of suspected vigilante gunmen in the first 18 days of the year. Reports reaching the police said Castro was buying a hair gel in a store at around 8 a.m. when a gunman shot him in the head. The suspect fled on board a motorcycle driven by another man.

Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Councilor disqualified

CITY OF CALAPAN—The Commission on Elections, in an en banc decision, ordered City Councilor Allan Froilan Mañibo suspended for failing to submit his statement of contributions and expenditures in the 1998 and 2001 elections. Mañibo won again on his fourth attempt in last year's elections. The decision said the councilor will be fined P2,000 per violation. He was charged criminally for the violations and perpetually disqualified from holding any public office, said Igmedio Mañibo, Sangguniang Panlunsod secretary.

Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

36 families get houses

AFTER enduring the dangers of living in a quarry site and being uncompensated by previous owners of the property, 36 families belonging to the Angkalon Farmers Association now enjoy their own homes in Lugait, Misamis Oriental, when Holcim Philippines (formerly Union Cement Corp.), facilitated their relocation in December last year, according to a news release. Under a memorandum of agreement, Holcim Philippines provided a third of the P2-million budget for the project, while the local government agreed to finance another third of the cost. The Habitat for Humanities-Iligan City, also signified its intention to help in the project and shoulder the remaining cost. The project proponents also launched the "Galing Mason Training," a livelihood skills training program for the farmers.

INQUIRER Visayas

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

Youth offenders get second chance in 'House of Hope'

By Carla P. Gomez
Bacolod City

THE BALAY PAG-ASA for youthful offenders

PHILIP LOYOLA/CONTRIBUTOR

YOUTH offenders have found fresh hope and caring people in a house in Barangay Granada, Bacolod City.

The "Balay Pag-asa" (House of Hope) Youth Center is home to boys, aged 9 to 17 years old, who get into trouble with the law, according to Bro. Gus Boquer, president of the University of St. La Salle (USLS), which runs the facility.

While their cases are being handled in the courts, the judges have entrusted the boys to the Balay Pag-asa for rehabilitation. Those who receive suspended sentences are kept in the facility until such time that the judges deem proper for their total rehabilitation, Boquer said.

"While they are here, it is like a boarding school—they have full education and skills development—so that when they finish they either go for further studies or are prepared for work to start a new life," he said.

"It's the only one of its kind in the Philippines," he said, hoping that it could be replicated in other parts of the country.

"Right now, there are more than 20,000 boys languishing in jail all over the country," he lamented.

Opened in 2002, the Balay Pag-asa currently provides shelter to 20 youth offenders from all over Negros Occidental.

It can accommodate 60 people, and even 120 when the second phase of the project is completed, Boquer said. The plan is to eventually take in youth offenders from all the provinces of Panay—Iloilo, Antique, Aklan and Capiz.

Poor families

The boys at the home are facing charges ranging from theft and homicide to rape. Most of them come from large and very poor families, said Fernando Belleza, USLS liaison officer.

But Boquer said some of the boys were not guilty of the crimes but were just victims of circumstances.

He cited the case of an 11-year-old boy who was brought to the Balay Pag-asa when he was 9 after he was accused of being an accomplice of thieves. The boy was said to be the lookout of the thieves and would clap his hands when people were approaching.

"When he first came, it was his birthday so we got him a cake with candles on it. But he did not know that he had to blow them out because he had never had a birthday party, Belleza said.

Boquer said the boys were chosen based on their readiness and willingness to be rehabilitated. "They are given so much love and affection here ... We prepare them well for the future."

The house has been allocated five hectares of the 55-hectare Granada campus of the USLS. It "was built by the Lord on purely providence," Boquer said.

It has a chapel, executive quarters where the judges can meet with the boys to check on their progress, a reflection room for boys who misbehave, an infirmary, TV and music room, and a library.

The facility also has a receiving room where parents meet them once a week on Sunday afternoons.

Dedicated patrons

And there are some dedicated patrons or patroness, too.

On Jan. 21, Gretchen O. Cojuangco, wife of business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., did her share of appealing for help for the Balay Pag-asa.

"This is truly God's work and whoever gets involved pleases Him immensely," said Cojuangco, who celebrated her 67th birthday at the home with her husband, relatives, friends and some government officials.

She said she was surprised to find that not so many people knew about the Balay Pag-asa, so she thought it would do good to bring all her guests there on her birthday so they could see for themselves what it was like.

Aside from being a trustee of the Balay Pag-asa, Cojuangco teaches the boys gardening and how to plant and care for trees. Boquer said the plants, trees and greening services in the courtyard are her gifts to the home.

"By providing a house where they can once more get in touch with themselves and their potentials, we are snatching our youth who are in conflict with the law away from a doomed future," Cojuangco said.

Preparing for life

"With this house, we are giving a second chance to young people who otherwise would be forever condemned to a life of crime and punishment. Who knows how many future crimes we are preventing by bringing back hope to the lives of these youthful offenders?"

Bro. Dimitri Gatia said Cojuangco's work at the home was helping prepare many young boys for life, and that he hoped what she was doing would inspire others to follow.

Fr. Emil Henares, who gave the homily during the Mass, also noted the work of Cojuangco at the Casa Providencia for orphaned children in Pontevedra town.

In the case of Balay Pag-asa, Boquer said they would continue to accept cash donations, which are placed in endowment programs for the rehabilitation of the boys.

Productive young men

At the Balay Pag-asa, the boys go to regular classes handled by teachers from the St. Joseph's High School. They are also taught electronics, tailoring, carpentry, barber work, gardening and computer work, as well as weather forecasting, handicraft making, culinary arts and food processing.

The boys prepare *tapa* (beef jerky), *tocino*, *lumpia*, burger patties, *chorizo*, *embotido*, *siomai* and ham. Profit from the sale of the food products are divided among them.

Last Christmas, the boys sold 150 pieces of ham, Belleza said.

They also earn from tailoring and laundry work.

The boys learn how to save their earnings in the bank, Belleza said.

The boys' potentials in painting and music are also tapped, he said, noting that three boys who never saw a piano in their lives discovered that they had the talent to play "ouido," or by ear.

Three boys who had stayed at the home have found jobs elsewhere as barber, dishwasher and janitor.

Another is a scholar at the St. Joseph's High School and is graduating with honors.

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YAGYAG FESTIVAL

Crab mentality wins in Sinulog

By Alex Pal
Cebu City

MY, MY, look at these crabs—they're so cute!" gushed a European tourist, his camera instantly clicking away.

No, he wasn't watching real crabs but the 160 Yagyag Festival dancers garbed in crab costumes of red and gold—the traditional Sto. Niño colors—to tell the real story of how they live with the crustaceans back home in Cangmating, Sibulan, Negros Oriental.

To the beat of the drums, the dancers meticulously imitate the movement of the crabs, from the time they come out to mate, spawn and, finally, until the king crab gets captured in a giant bamboo basket.

The fast movements and the unique story line of the number became an instant hit among thousands of people who turned out for the Sinulog Festival in Cebu City last week.

The performers topped the street dancing category, besting 47 other contingents, and winning P200,000 in cash, a plaque and a trophy. The money was on top of the P100,000 given by the provincial government of Negros Oriental and the P75,000 extended by the municipality of Sibulan.

The group also placed sixth in the free interpretation showdown category.

Crab haven

Cangmating is a haven of crabs, locally known as *caging* (*Cardisoma carnifex*) and *alalasan* (*Episesarma singaparense*), which appear by the thousands, especially during the last quarter of the year, to mate or lay eggs along the riverbanks. The sight of countless crabs spread out on the marshlands inspired the villagers to name the occurrence "*pagyagyag*," after the Visayan word "*yagyag*," meaning "to pour out."

With David Dean Ang's choreography, the dancers demonstrated how the villagers prepared their bamboo baskets, torches and crab traps at night.

"This is my first time to see such a different kind of dance in the Sinulog, and that's probably why it stood out from all the other entries," said Jackie Flores, a Sinulog devotee who traveled from Dumaguete City just to see the yearly religious and tourist attraction.

Cangmating barangay chair Edwin Parajado, who led the Yagyag delegation, said they were stalled more than twice during the parade for giving in to requests for an encore in the entire 4.3-km Sinulog route. There were also requests from tourists and local spectators for souvenir shots taken with the dancers.

It was not the first time for the Yagyag Festival to reap awards. It has won consistently in the Buglasan Festival in Negros Oriental, which is held every October. It is also the 2003 National Street Dancing Champion in the Wow Philippines Festival of Festivals competition in Intramuros, Manila.

Social significance

More than depicting the spawning and gathering of crabs, festival organizers stressed that Yagyag praised "this generous natural resource" portrayed by the dancers, who imitate its movements in lively rhythms that culminated "in a celebration of the cycle of life that endows Cangmating with nutrition and livelihood."

The dance that Ang choreographed with the help of town Councilor Manuel Diputado and Irish Indira Requiron, also conveyed important social messages by demonstrating the land crab's characteristics of unity and solidarity "by keeping close ranks and moving along a common agenda: that of propagating their kind and of protecting their young."

Thus, it illustrated some degree of parallelism in the country's history when heroes "united our people to protect their rights and preserve their patrimony."

"The gallantry of the land crabs in facing up to the sacrifice of themselves in order to nourish human life reflects the Filipino hero's conviction to give up his life, if need be, so that the republic will endure," so goes the dance's story line.

Investment, tourism

"Upholding the throne as the best of the best is the group's primary aim," said a triumphant Mayor Antonio Renacia of the victory in the Sinulog Festival.

Sibulan, 6 km from Dumaguete, was created by the Philippine Commission through Act No. 82. It hosts the Dumaguete airport and some of Negros Oriental's tourist sites, such as the Twin Lakes of Balinsasayao and Danao, 1,000 meters above sea level, and beaches.

Sibulan chose to join the Cebu event because it is the best venue to promote the town, Renacia said. "People everywhere from all walks of life are there."

He expressed hopes that the festival would help spur tourism and investment opportunities for his town.

The Yagyag dancers will celebrate their victory with a street performance in Sibulan on Jan. 31, on the occasion of the town's 95th anniversary as a municipality. *With a report from Romy G. Amarado*

Energy chief now admits crisis real, action 'VITAL'

From page A1

reading from the same page as Lopez.

In an interview with the INQUIRER and InqTV the weekend before he announced his resignation, he noted that supply in Luzon was sufficient until 2008, but that in Visayas and Mindanao it was "somewhat thin."

The one-page summary paper his office had prepared was even clearer. "Power crisis," its headline read. "The country is facing an imminent power supply shortage. Strategic power planning and coordinated action is VITAL in order to avert this potential economic disaster." (Emphasis in the original.)

The DOE paper noted that Mindanao needed to build additional capacity "beginning 2005."

But in a briefing before INQUIRER editors, Lopez effectively upped the ante, saying: "To us, a reserve crisis is already a power crisis."

He pointed to in-house projections which showed that, based on the assumption that the economy would grow by 5 percent a year, reserves would be insufficient by 2006.

Updated energy plan

The DOE's updated Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) for the 2005-2014 planning period is more specific. Luzon and Visayas will start needing additional capacity by 2008, while Mindanao is already short of capacity this year.

By 2008, the Luzon grid should have at least 150 megawatts (MW) of new capacity. In the six years after that, the grid will require more than 1,000 MW in additional capacity each year: 1,050 MW in 2009 and 2011-2013, 1,600 MW in 2010, and 1,200 MW in 2014.

The Visayas grid will require another 100 MW in new capacity in 2008 and 2012-2013 and 150 MW in 2011 and 2014.

As early as this year, the Mindanao grid will need 150 MW in new capacity. It will then require 100 MW in additional capacity in 2006-2007 and 2012 and 50 MW in 2008-2011 and 2013.

First Generation sees Luzon needing new capacity by 2007 or 2008, depending on the growth of the economy. At the same time, its in-house study shows that the Visayas and Mindanao grids are already experiencing sporadic and even rotating brownouts.

While, according to DOE forecasts, the Luzon grid will need 7,200 MW in new capacity in the next 10 years, the committed capacity in the country's biggest load center is a measly 65 MW: 25 MW from the North Wind Power Corp. wind power project in Bangui Bay, Ilocos Norte and 40 MW from the Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) wind power project also in Ilocos Norte. The two projects should come on stream by this year and the next.

The Visayas grid has more capacity commitments at 255 MW, but this amount still falls short of the 2005-2014 additional capacity requirement of 600 MW.

Of the 255 MW in committed capacity, 151 MW will come on-stream this year: 110 MW from the transfer of the Pinamucan diesel power plant from Batangas to Dingle in Cebu, 3.4 MW from the Guimaras diesel power plant and 37.5 MW from Mirant Philippines Corp.'s diesel power plants in the main grid.

Another 60 MW from the optimization of PNOC-EDC's Northern Negros and Palinpinon geothermal power facilities and 24 MW from the Talisay bagasse co-generation plant in Negros will be added in 2007. The remaining 20 MW will come from the Bais bio-energy facility in Negros by 2008.

Capacity commitments in Mindanao are higher still at a total of 285 MW, but are still lower than the total additional capacity requirement of 850 MW in the 10-year planning period. The additional capacity will come from the transfer of power barges 101, 103 and 104 (75 MW) this year and from the 200-MW Mindanao Coal Corp. coal-fired power plant that will come on stream by 2010.

Hardly any investor interest

As if the imbalance between prospective demand and committed capacity over the next 10 years is not bad enough, there are hardly any plans on the drawing board right now to put up new plants.

Because setting up a power plant takes some four to five years, with the planning and financing that go with it, Lopez said there is no better time than now to start planning to build one.

Right now, the year when the crisis will start is secondary, he says. Planning and securing financing for and building the right kinds of power plants should be the focus of our time and attention if the crisis is to be averted.

A return to the vicious cycle of power crisis that the country experienced in the early 1990s is still a possibility if nothing is done now to stop it, Lopez warns.

If, for example, the rotating brownouts of the early 1990s—as many as 299 days in 1993—come back to haunt us, the need to build new plants will be so urgent that a lack of thorough negotiation of contracts may take place.

This will result in high electricity rates for a number of reasons: the contracts themselves, the possibility of overbuilding plants, which can lead to low capacity utilization, and the small number of players.

Return to rotating brownouts?

As with what has been happening these past years, any jump in rates invites consumer outrage. This outrage can and has actually pushed the government to exert extra effort to ensure that consumers do not remain outraged for long.

An unstable regulatory environment then develops, a major turn-off for potential investors.

With electricity rates not reflecting the true costs of power generation, demand will most likely outstrip supply in a short span of time. Which will bring the country back to the rotating brownouts that it is trying so hard to avoid.

"We don't have much time to meet the power capacity requirements. The sooner we move now, the more options we have," Perez said.

"Therefore, we'll be forced once again to bring in IPPs (independent power producers), and our negotiating leverage will be weakened because of the urgency of getting additional capacity," he added.

Reforms needed now

The birth of Republic Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), paved the way for a healthier and more stable power industry. Or, at least, that was the idea behind the law.

Many of the Epira's provisions, however, were not implemented. Some of these include the removal of different sorts of cross-subsidies three years upon the implementation of the law, the establishment of the wholesale electricity spot market within a year of the law's effectivity, and the implementation of retail competition and open access.

"Many of the reforms have been either delayed or stalled, and the power industry is not yet attracting the kind of investments we should be getting to keep the sector sustainable," says Lopez. "If we keep this up, sooner or later, we will run into a shortage. We should get the reforms back on track before time runs out."

IN THE KNOW

Brownout days

THOSE who are in high school now may well be called Brownout Babies, for many of them were in infancy when the country suffered through its worst power crisis since World War II.

In 1988, the same year the ill-fated Bataan Nuclear Power Plant was mothballed, the country experienced a total of eight days with power outages. In 1989, the year military adventurists launched their most destructive coup attempt, the number of brownout days had already risen to 28.

In 1990, the total more than tripled, to 99. Stop-gap measures instituted the following year brought the number down to 25 in 1991, but it was only a temporary reprieve.

The worst years of the power crisis came next, slowing the economy to a crawl. In 1992, the year Fidel Ramos was elected president, the country endured a total of 264 brownout days. The next year proved even worse, with the total going up to 299 days. In other words, in 1993, the public endured power outages for almost 10 months out of the entire year.

In 1994, the first fast-track projects came online, with marked results. That year, the number of brownout days dropped to 15.

What crisis? Militants say it's baloney

From page A1

Electricity Consumers for Reforms, an advocacy group, said. Other power reform advocates shared his view.

"It's not correct [to say] that we have a shortage," Akbayan Rep. Etta Rosales said, noting that "we have excess capacity in Luzon" and "Mindanao has a lot of potential."

Bayan spokesperson Renato Reyes warned that the crisis bogey was being raised to "scare the public."

"Our worry is that the power crisis has always been dangled to justify the privatization of the power industry and of course for new rate increases," Reyes said. "Right now, that's what's happening."

Rosales gave vent to the same suspicion. "Sometimes I think they are deliberately saying that [that a power crisis is imminent] to justify increasing the rates, because they say investors won't come unless they're getting their money's worth."

While Ilagan, Rosales, and Reyes all downplayed the crisis warning, they differed sharply in their reasoning.

Ilagan said accelerated privatization was key. "When we had a power crisis, they said it was because the NPC [the National Power Corp. or Napocor] did not have any money. And because the government didn't have any money, the monopoly was opened up to the private sector," he said in a mixture of English and Filipino.

"[In other words,] the solution to the power crisis was opening [up] the monopoly."

He said a crisis in supply won't occur, "unless government does not put competition in place."

What the government should do is "remove obstacles to competition, to become strong-willed" in accelerating privatization.

No to privatization

Reyes, who is also president of People Opposed to Warrantless Electricity Rates, or POWER, said he held the opposite view.

Privatization is not the answer, he said, "because [our] worry with privatization is you place a public utility in the hands of a group who is motivated by profit, not public service." Therefore, "it's not really going to benefit the people."

The solution is to reverse the privatization jump-started by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (or Epira). "We have long believed that the power industry has to be nationalized."

"The promises of Epira, of lower prices, did not really materialize," Reyes added.

He shared a briefing paper— written by Giovanni Tapang and Kim Gargar of the concerned scientists group Agham and Ramon Ramirez of POWER—which echoes the same conclusion. (A complete copy is available on www.inq7.net/power.)

"The government's objective in privatizing Napocor is to cut losses from loans and pass on the burden of power infrastructure investment to the private sector, while earning revenues from the sale," the paper reads. "Contrary to what has been promised during the passage of the law, the Epira has not caused any real decrease in power rates."

The middle road

Rosales hewed closely to the middle road, arguing for both private sector participation and government regulation.

"I think a joint effort is necessary. We should try to mobilize private capital but management and administration must be regulated."

She said that what she called "consumer capital" was critical to the long-term viability of the power industry. "In that sense I believe in private capital, but the private capital of local stakeholders, not foreign investors who wouldn't care a whit" [about Filipino concerns].

(She then made a dig at the Enrons of the industry, now global symbols of mismanagement and unethical business practices. "Why are we still looking up to them?" she asked.)

She said one way to bring down power rates was to go back to the boardroom. "We really have to start renegotiating the contracts [that were] proven onerous. There are at least five of them, including Sual, San Roque, and Casecnan."

"Personally," she added, "I'm against privatizing our crown jewels, such as Masinloc."

Back to Epira

But Ilagan said the focus must be on implementing EPIRA. "Yes, delayed *na nga tayo* (we are already delayed as it is)," he said.

Can more competition lead, not to lower prices, but to higher rates?

"If the consumer won't do anything, that will happen," he said. "If we're content to be watchers, then that will really happen. That's why we have to educate consumers, to give them a voice."

Ilagan was reached in Bukidnon, while in transit between consumer education forums in Davao and Cagayan de Oro.

In Manila, Reyes took pains to point out that, inevitably, vested interests were also at stake whenever the crisis bogey is resurrected.

"I'd also like to add that whenever there is a power crisis, there will also be interest groups who would take advantage of the shortage so they could make a quick buck. Just like the IPPs [Independent Power Producers] during the Ramos administration [which] were given generous guarantees ... or the local power monopolies who have their own IPPs."

He means you-know-who, of course.

Officer behind 'bogus' raid to get real medal

From page A1

Amid criticisms from the Muslim community, a police colonel is set to receive the Philippine National Police's second highest award.

Senior Supt. Federico Laciste Jr. will receive the distinguished conduct medal from President Macapagal-Arroyo during the PNP's 14th anniversary rites at Camp Crame on Monday.

Laciste's unit, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region, was behind the much-criticized raid of the Islamic Information Center on Taft Avenue in Manila, which led to the arrest of 17 Muslims early this month.

All but two of the suspects were freed due to lack of evidence. Muslim leaders slammed the raid as fabricated, saying the bombs and guns found in the center had been planted.

Even police intelligence operatives had claimed that the raid was based on Oplan: Green Archer, an allegedly bogus CIDG report claiming that a group of Islamic converts were out to assassinate the President.

But the PNP leadership is convinced that Laciste deserves the medal because of his "heroism during police operations against terrorist groups and criminal elements."

Before joining the CIDG, Laciste's accomplishments focused on operations against drug trafficking.

He was PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay's foot soldier when he was head of the police anti-illegal drugs special operations task force.

The unit, a support group of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, was behind most of the operations that knocked down at least 14 shabu laboratories from 2003 to 2004.

Laciste will receive the award along with Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, director of the PNP Intelligence Group.

Chief Supt. Reynaldo Varilla, former Calabarzon regional director, will receive the presidential streamer award.

Other awardees are: Supt. Isagani Genabe Jr. and Senior Supt. Napoleon Estilles are the senior police commissioned officers of the year for administration and operations, respectively; Senior Insp. William Gadayan is junior police commissioned officer (PCO) of the year; SPO1 Charlito Corpuz is the senior police non-commissioned officer (PNCO) of the year.

Benguet is the top provincial police office while Davao is the city police office of the year.

Balanga is the top city police station while Jolo is the No. 1 town police station.

'Pinoys make do with less'

From page A1

of life in the next 12 months," the pessimists outnumbered the optimists by 5 percent at the end of 2004.

The surveys, all conducted last year, covered the elections, foreign relations, personal quality of life, governance, the Erap (Estrada) factor, corruption, democracy and general morale. The results of these individual surveys had all been previously released.

The 2004 survey data were also compared with SWS surveys of the past 20 years under five presidents, from the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos to the present.

To the question, "Comparing your quality of life these days to how it was 12 months ago, would you say that your quality of life is...," most of the respondents said life had become worse.

Over the past 20 years there had always been more losers than gainers, but in the recent years the gap between them has even widened.

"Self-rated poverty has declined but families' thresholds of poverty have also fallen," the SWS said.

This means that while the number of those who thought they were poor has dropped, the poverty line has moved down. It could mean that the people's standards have changed, and that they are content with less, Mangahas said.

"Hunger was very high in August, but abated a bit later. Self-rated poverty declined by end-2000, apparently due to belt-tightening or lowering of living standards," the SWS said, adding:

"Self-rated health declined a bit. Past trends and future expectations of quality of life were negative. Crime victimization and the sense of vulnerability to break-ins and of danger in neighborhood streets veered up slightly."

Strong RP-US bond

Decades of Filipino immigration to the United States have forged a strong bond and "demographic connection" between that country and the Philippines.

The opinions of Muslim Filipinos and Christian Filipinos differed significantly, with the latter having more trust in the United States.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's move to withdraw Filipino troops in Iraq for the release of hostage Angelo de la Cruz was popular, but "most people realized it showed weakness and feared US retaliation as a result," the SWS said.

The four surveys conducted from April to December 2004 showed that "public satisfaction" with Ms Arroyo and with many national officials had declined.

And while the administration rated positively in foreign relations and national security, it rated negatively in inflation and graft and corruption.

City and municipal governments, unlike the national government, rated positively in the promotion of women's welfare.

The Erap factor

Public attention on the plunder trial of Joseph "Erap" Estrada has remained undiminished, but attitudes toward the deposed President, who has been in detention since April 2001, "are softening a bit and his trust rating has recovered to positive levels."

Opinions on how the present administration is treating Estrada have never been more divided, and most Filipinos agreed with the Sandiganbayan decision allowing house arrest for him.

Ratings of the government in "net sincerity in fighting corruption" decreased. Those that were still on the positive side—the Supreme Court, health, barangay government, budget and management, education, Sandiganbayan and the Office of the President—became "less positive."

Crossing over to the negative side was the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission. It joined those already in the negative—the interior and public works departments, Senate, House of Representatives, Land Transportation Office, Philippine National Police, and the internal revenue and customs bureaus.

The SWS noted that the private-sector-led Coalition Against Corruption was formed as a result of the four rounds of the annual SWS Survey of Enterprises on Corruption for the Transparent Accountable Governance (TAG).

Among the 2003/2004 TAG survey findings was that 50 percent of managers personally encountered public sector corruption in the three months before the survey.

GMA win margin overestimated

The SWS tracked the vital turning points and characteristics of the May 2004 presidential election, among them the issue of Fernando Poe Jr.'s citizenship and Raul Roco's illness.

It admitted overestimating Ms Arroyo's winning margin in its "rain-hampered SWS/ABS-CBN exit poll," but stressed that its credibility was maintained.

The exit poll estimate was 45 percent for Ms Arroyo and 34 percent for Poe.

Ms Arroyo got 39 percent and Poe 37 percent in the quick count of the National Movement for Free Elections, and 40 percent and 36.5 percent, respectively—or a narrow margin of 3.5 percent—in the official results of the Commission on Elections.

The SWS' August survey said "most Filipinos, except Visayans, felt that [Poe] and [vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda] were cheated."

Mangahas said the May 2004 presidential election was "the narrowest contest since 1946," showing the slimmest percentage difference between the first and second places, slimmer than in the 1992 contest between Fidel Ramos and Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Authoritarianism

The SWS said only 40 percent of Filipinos were satisfied with how democracy worked. It said most preferred a more authoritarian government, and that they were keeping a watchful eye on the loyalty of the military.

But the SWS clarified: "The current troubles of Filipinos do not include lack of national pride or satisfaction with life."

STOP ATTACK!
DE VENECIA
PRO VAT ANTI POOR
BIAZON
12%-VAT KONTRA MAHIRAP -SANLAKAS-
DAGDAG NA VAT DAGDAG PAHIRAP! SANLAKAS
FAMILY'S BRAND
BONUS PACK

BEARING the photos of pro-VAT congressmen, Sanlakas members stage a rally to protest the increase in VAT which did not exempt noodles, milk and sardines in the House bill that passed dawn Thursday. ERIK ARAZAS

Anti-VAT groups take ...

From page A1

get hit by this VAT. You can ask around. Nobody wants this additional tax."

Escudero said that instead of raising the VAT, the government should improve its collection of the VAT. He noted that the government managed to collect only P144 billion, or 48 percent of its P300-billion target, last year.

"Why don't we collect the rest of the 52 percent first? If that's not enough, then that's the time we start talking about increasing [the VAT]," he said.

Escudero said that on Monday, he and his colleagues would formally seek a reconsideration of the House approval of the VAT increase bill.

Emotional rabble rousing

In Malacañang, Ms Arroyo's spokesperson appealed to those opposing the new tax measures not to get emotional over the issue, saying new taxes would bring about "a better economy and a better life" for Filipinos.

"The fiscal reform program is a major linchpin of our economic security, and let us not turn it into a subject of emotional rabble-rousing," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye said the public, including the opposition and even Palace allies opposing the VAT increase, should look at the "positive side" of the tax measures.

"We have to unite and each must have a share and stake in the future of our country. We are starting to move forward. Let us not break the momentum of confidence and growth," he said.

Addressing fears that the proposed 20-percent increase in the VAT would bring about higher prices of goods, Malacañang promised: "Once the increased VAT is signed into law and eventually implemented, the government shall closely watch the prices of basic commodities that are VAT-exempt and act with resolve to protect the interest of the consumers."

Why the rush?

Sen. Joker Arroyo, one of those opposed to the VAT increase bill, wondered aloud why the Senate was rushing to pass the measure when it was scheduled to start deliberating next week on the proposed P907.6-billion budget of 2005.

"That means the administration wants to fast-track the VAT bill. But it cannot be fast-tracked. It can wait, and should undergo the appropriate consideration," the administration senator said at a press conference.

Starting on Monday, the Senate will hold morning and afternoon sessions as well as Thursday and Friday sessions in order to approve the 2005 proposed budget by next month.

At the same time, the Senate ways and means committee will begin to hold public hearings on the VAT bill.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said on Thursday that majority senators were committed to passing the measure. He said floor debates on it would end before the chamber starts its Easter break on March 18.

According to Arroyo, who said on Thursday that he would block the passage of the measure, many senators are against it "in its present form."

He said majority senators were leading the fight because the House measure had supposedly been hastily approved and badly done.

Commitment to fight

At least two other administration senators, Manuel Villar Jr. and Francis Pangilinan, said they were against increasing the VAT rate.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, a member of the minority, balked at Drilon's optimistic forecast that the VAT measure would have smooth sailing in the chamber.

"If they [think they can] railroad this through the Senate, like they did in the House, then they have another think coming," he said in a press conference.

"They have conducted several hearings [about the VAT] that I have been unable to attend because the budget is the priority. I don't understand why the Senate would want to rush through the VAT," he said.

Arroyo said he also could not help but wonder why the House bill focused only on increasing the VAT and did not include lifting the exemptions of industries not paying the rate.

He said it would be better if legislators first determined whether the lifting of exemptions to the VAT rate would earn sufficient revenues for the government.

"Then, there would be no need to raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent," he said.

Reminding reporters that he had been anti-VAT since 1997, Arroyo reiterated his commitment to fight the proposed increase.

He also expressed concern that the "small people" should be resigned to thinking that the government could not do anything for them.

'Safety nets'

In a TV interview, Speaker Jose de Venecia said basic consumption items such as noodles and sardines would still be exempt from the expanded VAT in the final version of the measure.

He said the House contingent in the bicameral conference committee was determined to include in the list of exemptions other basic goods like corned beef and other canned goods.

"I'm happy to inform you that we will work with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Ralph Recto to include other additional adjustments for the people, like canned goods," De Venecia said, adding:

"The key here is, we will try to exempt these basic needs as much as possible. This will provide the necessary safety nets to our people."

Still exempted from the VAT are rice, fish, vegetables, bread, *bagoong* (fish paste) and *pandesal*.

The passage of the VAT measure on third and final reading by the House on Thursday has already caused prices to rise in some markets, according to Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran.

He said manufacturers had begun computing their price adjustments as a result of the proposed increase in the VAT from 10 to 12 percent.

The measure will still go to the conference committee to reconcile it with the Senate version. The final version will be recommitted for plenary voting of both chambers of Congress.

'Save the nation'

De Venecia said the increased VAT was necessary to prevent a crisis in the economy that would directly hit the middle class and the poor.

"This is a save-the-nation legislation," he said. "We need new revenues for the government to create jobs, finance its infrastructure program, build hospitals and schools, and prevent the collapse of the economy."

Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan, the ruling Lakas' coordinator for the Cordillera, said representatives of some of the poorest provinces were now studying how their votes favoring an expanded VAT would affect their constituents.

Domogan said these lawmakers, including those from the Cordillera, were convinced that the government's P200-billion state deficit required extreme and "painful" measures such as the new VAT measure for the economy to survive.

The national poverty index places four Cordillera provinces—Mt. Province, Abra, Kalinga and Ifugao—among the poorest in the country. *With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana, Cynthia D. Balana and Heidi Lenffer in Manila; Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

VAT foes dare Bunye: Try 'carinderia'

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

BUNYE

PRESS Secretary Ignacio Bunye should skip fine dining and try eating at a *carinderia*, the poor man's restaurant.

This was the challenge posed yesterday by Renato Reyes Jr., secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, to allow Bunye to see the supposed absurdity of his claim that the poor would be immune from the inflationary impact of the Palace-backed increase in the value-added tax.

"When was the last time Bunye ate in a *carinderia?* Eating in a *carinderia* is not as cheap as it used to be," Reyes said.

The activist leader was reacting to Bunye's assertion on Thursday that the increase in the VAT from 10 to 12 percent would affect only people eating in fancy restaurants, and not the habitues of roadside eateries.

"Once again, Secretary Bunye muddles the issues," Reyes said. "Such an assertion is highly illogical. He doesn't know what he's talking about."

According to Reyes, the materials used in preparing food—whether in *carinderias* or posh hotels—will be automatically covered by a VAT increase because such ingredients as oil, milk, sugar and canned products are subject to the VAT.

He pointed out that the main issue in the debate on the VAT increase was not the exempted products or the safety nets that the government would install to protect low-income consumers.

"The issue is: Why is the government penalizing taxpayers for the inefficiencies in tax collections and exemptions? Why is the public being made to pay through taxes the onerous foreign loans incurred by the government?" he said.

Reyes likewise chided President Macapagal-Arroyo for her public elation over the strengthening of the peso and the entry of foreign investments.

"At the risk of sounding like a partypooper, the strong performance of the peso and the influx of new foreign investments are not indicators of longterm economic growth but are, rather, spasmodic developments that can dissipate any time," he said.

"A stronger peso and huge foreign investments do not impact as heavily on the poor as, say, new tax measures such as the increase in the VAT. The reasons for rejoicing are simply lost on the poor, who now have to carry the burden of the new revenue measures," he added.

Reyes said Ms Arroyo's claim of economic growth was mere "hype."

He said that for the masses to feel the benefits of rosy economic figures, the President should first be sensitive to the demands of labor for higher wages.

Pinoy dies in 3-train wreck in US

From page A1

Rex Deguia, the family's spokesman. "He really loved his friends and his family—they were his passions."

Caballero moved to Southern California in the early 1990s.

He rode the Metrolink train almost every day from his home in the San Fernando Valley to Los Angeles, where he works as an accountant for the city's Department of Aging.

Caballero is survived by his wife Victoria, two daughters, a son and an 8-month-old granddaughter.

Counts of murder

Meanwhile, Los Angeles County prosecutors on Thursday charged the Jeep's driver, Juan M. Alvarez, with 11 counts of murder, one for each person who died in the train wreck that they say he caused with his failed suicide attempt.

The charges included the special circumstances of using the train, which could make Alvarez, 25, eligible for the death penalty.

He could also face federal charges in the train derailment.

He was to stand in court on Thursday afternoon and answer the charges, but his appearance was postponed until Friday because he was too weak from wounds he inflicted on his wrists and chest before the wreck, prosecutors said.

Steve Cooley, Los Angeles County district attorney, said in an interview that he would not decide whether to seek the death penalty until the case was thoroughly reviewed by his office.

200 injured

His voice firm with anger, Cooley called Alvarez a self-centered man whose aborted suicide attempt on the Glendale railroad crossing led to 11 deaths in the early morning darkness. The body of one man was burned so badly it has yet to be identified. Another 200 people were injured.

"Because this man was distressed, 11 people are dead from his selfishness," Cooley said. "They said he was not well enough to appear today. Hopefully, they will patch him up so we can get this case rolling."

Criminal act

Alvarez was being held in a special custody ward at an area hospital.

On Thursday, the National Transportation Safety Board said it would not conduct a full investigation of the crash because it appeared to be the result of a criminal act.

"We're not doing our standard investigation which would involve determination of cause," said Paul Schlamm, a spokesman for the agency in Washington. "We're taking a more limited role here." *AP and New York Times News Service*

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Open dump operators face lawsuits

By Volt Contreras

CONSIDER yourselves warned.

This was the message conveyed yesterday by the National Solid Waste Management Commission to local government units (LGUs) in Metro Manila who could be maintaining open dumps for their garbage.

The commission's executive director, Albert Magalang, said his agency will be serving as a data provider for the Philippine Bar Association and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. The two bodies are now readying charges against LGUs found violating the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

The PBA and IBP would be issuing "anytime soon" Notices to Sue to town or city governments violating Republic Act 9003, Magalang added.

Under the law, all open dumps should have been converted into "controlled" waste disposal facilities within three years after the law took effect. The deadline lapsed last February, or almost a year ago.

The "citizens' suits" will be filed by the two organizations, which would serve as the complainants in behalf of the public, Magalang said.

The commission would be "providing monitoring and compliance reports and other data that the PBA and IBP will use to build the cases," he said.

A confidential list of LGUs nationwide who are candidates for such lawsuits—classified as "First Priority and Second Priority" in terms of the violation—is in the hands of the commission.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said there are at least 474 open dumps still operating around the country, although 245 were already converted last year into controlled facilities.

But according to the ecological watchdog Bangon Kalikasan, the number of open dumps could reach 800, or almost double the DENR figures. Kalikasan official Joey Papa said open dumps give people more reason to worry, compared to the public health alert over meningococcemia, since the sites had been around for a longer period.

Unique show not only for the birds

By Tina G. Santos

A UNIQUE bird show at a Quezon City park illustrates that the best way to institute change and ensure the survival of wildlife is to teach people about the wonders of Mother Nature's creatures through interaction.

Veterinarian and wildlife conservationist Roberto Puentespina Jr., or "Dr. Bo," has come up with a show featuring a colorful profusion of talented birds, ranging from an endangered Philippine Sea Eagle to cheeky parrots and ostriches.

Aided by a Macromedia Flash presentation, Dr. Bo's "The Amazing Bird Show" features photographs and a narration about dinosaurs and how Philippine bird species could die out if people don't act now.

More than 20 species and 200 bird performers show off tricks they learned like playing basketball, riding a scooter, even greeting the audience and singing a local ballad.

When INQUIRER came to visit, Dr. Bo summoned a Philippine Hawk Eagle, which gently landed on his left arm. Soon after, parrots Maganda and Waly brought the house down as they rode a scooter and tried to outdo each other in a "basketball match."

Jazz, a male horn bill, and Maggie, a female horn bill, then entertained the crowd as they hopped on the wooden foyer, sometimes bumping into each other.

Balda is a rehabilitated Brahminy kite whose right wing had been deformed by a gunshot wound. However, he showed a great will to survive and is now quite an impressive flyer.

But Dr. Bo was quick to add that the show, which he tagged as an "alternative learning tool," aims to do more than just show the birds' colorful feathers.

Wacky, a crow, regaled the audience by drinking water from a half-full glass, placing stones in the glass to make the water level rise until he could take a sip.

Wacky teaches humans to become patient to get desired results, Dr. Bo said, adding that the long-term benefits of teaching children about the values of a healthy environment would teach them to respect life.

"By presenting these complex concepts to children in a way they can understand, we hope to contribute to the protection of our feathered friends and, ultimately, teach children why they should respect life in whatever form it may come. I also want the children to learn about the birds and to interact with them," Puentespina added.

His children—Robert III, 11; Ingrid, 8, and Sophia, 4—are his eager assistants.

Dr. Bo said his fascination for birds started when he was a boy. His family owns the Malagos Garden Resort, one of Davao City's more popular attractions.

The resort's art and nature theme dominates the landscape in the 12-hectare haven where visitors can wander around the butterfly sanctuary and bird park, all manifestations of the conservation efforts of the Puentespina family.

"I have a passion for birds. Of the many different species in the country, there are two kinds: the captive breed, like pigeons and ducks, and the rehabilitated ones. Usually, the rehabilitated birds become neurotic because the owners kept them in a cage. Some owners gave these birds to me. I trained them and let them fly back to their homes," he said.

Birds that could no longer return to the wild were also used to teach the importance of their existence in the natural world, Dr. Bo said.

The decision to bring the show to Metro Manila for a wider audience reach came from years of watching similar shows Dr. Bo had seen abroad, where he marveled at how they were able to teach children valuable lessons about conservation, environment protection and preservation and, more important, respect for other living creatures.

"Every year, several species of birds are lost forever. The reasons for this are simple: greed, ignorance and apathy," he lamented. "The Philippines itself is home to one of the most dazzling arrays of bird species in the world, 172 species that can be found only in the country and nowhere else in the world."

A 1990 graduate of veterinary medicine from the University of the Philippines-Los Baños, Dr. Bo, also the proprietor of Animal Solutions Veterinary Hospital in Agdao (Davao), has received numerous awards.

He was awarded by the Veterinary Practitioners Association of the Philippines (Vpap) for outstanding practice in 2003 and was named Most Outstanding Veterinarian for Companion Animal Practice last year. In 2001, he received the Most Outstanding Veterinarian Award for Wildlife Practice.

Dr. Bo is currently a veterinary consultant of the Philippine Eagle Foundation.

DR. BO Puentespina plays with an ostrich before the start of an interactive bird show at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center in Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

Although the show is privately funded, Dr. Bo said it had earned the support of the Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources officials.

Dr. Bo said the proceeds of the show would be used for the upkeep of the birds and to beef up the research funds for wildlife conservation and rehabilitation. *With Arlene Ferrer*

The bird show will have its final run at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. tomorrow at the amphitheater of the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center in Quezon City.

Manila crackdown vs cybersex

By Tarra V. Quismundo

HOW DO you close down a cybersex den considering the laws still have to keep up with information technology advances?

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza counts the ways.

"They [establishments] may have unsanitary kitchens, dilapidated ceilings... (may be) fire hazards. There are so many laws mayors (can use) to close down cyberporn establishments masquerading as legitimate businesses," Atienza told the INQUIRER.

The mayor said existing laws provided several grounds that would justify closure of an establishment and arrest the proliferation of cyberporn.

Given the growth of the high-tech virtual flesh trade conducted over the Internet, Atienza has directed the police and city government agencies to crack down on shops in Manila known to be engaged in "cyberprostitution."

The national police force, now at the forefront of the campaign against cyberporn, said there was a lack of legislation penalizing cybersex, thus hampering their work.

"But the local government code, in fact, mandates local governments to protect the morals and values of the youth," said Atienza.

"With that mandate, we could use any law available pertaining to the operation of businesses," he added.

The mayor said any establishment in Manila found to be engaged in cyberporn would be shut down.

"The moment they are proven to be accessing porn [Internet] sites, we have many ways under existing laws on protection of morals [that can be used] against them," the mayor added.

Atienza has ordered the city's Business Promotion and Development Office to monitor all Internet shops to make sure they were giving only educational or clean fun to customers.

To be given special attention are computer shops near schools, he said.

Slippery 'suspect' causes uproar in police station

By Leila B. Salaverria

A 13-FOOT-LONG *sawa* (python) provided a waker-upper for Manila policemen on the graveyard shift early yesterday morning.

The snake was discovered and caught in a warehouse then brought to the Binondo police station in a sack.

But the reptile, with a body that police said was thicker than a man's wrist, escaped from the sack while being photographed by media people, sending both policemen and photographers scrambling out of its way.

SPO1 John Lui was not surprised by the commotion the reptile caused as it attempted to break out of the police station. The policeman also had quite a job catching the snake in a sack warehouse along an alley near Sto. Cristo Street in Binondo.

According to Lui, he was patrolling Sto. Cristo Street at 11:30 p.m. the other day to investigate reports of a robbery in the area when a barangay tanod informed him about the python. The snake was discovered by the owner of the sack warehouse, who immediately sought the help of barangay tanods.

Lui said he went to the warehouse and saw the snake's head among boxes and sacks. At first, he thought the snake was small because its head seemed tiny.

Using techniques he said he learned from watching snake handlers featured on Discovery and National Geographic channels on cable television, Lui tried to catch the python.

"*Para siyang* cobra *kung pumorma, lumalaban talaga* (It behaved like a cobra and fought hard)," he said, adding that the snake tried to strike at him. It took them half an hour to get the snake inside the sack.

The snake was brought to the Binondo police station where it tried to escape when reporters asked the police to open the sack for photographs. Eventually, policemen were able to grab the snake's tail and stuff it back in the sack.

What's happening to the Coast Guard?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

A LITTLE bird at the Coast Guard headquarters told me some high officials of that agency require suppliers to give them a 20-percent commission of the cost of the contract awarded to the suppliers.

Coast Guard ships sent out on missions are left to fend for themselves because they're not given enough fuel and food supplies, according to the "tweet-tweet" source.

This means Coast Guard ships are forced to ask (read: extort) fuel and supplies from fishing vessels and other ships carrying contraband cargo in the high seas.

Skippers of ships who are "not resourceful" (read: honest or do not have the stomach to extort) just moor their vessels in the port.

My little birdie said Coast Guard officials could not account for the P70-million allocation released in December 2004. Where did the money go, the bird tweeted. The little birdie said such things did not happen during the time of Vice Admiral Reuben Lista who retired last year.

* * *

Suelito C. Leong, the Filipino worker reported missing two weeks ago in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, turned up in a hospital morgue. Leong was said to have died of injuries sustained in a vehicular accident.

But why didn't the Al Iman General Hospital, where he was taken, report his death to the authorities? The answer is simple: Some Saudis don't care when a foreigner dies in their country.

Filipino contract workers in Saudi Arabia or those planning to work there should live with that fact. Many Filipinos who have worked in the oil-rich Arab kingdom told me that when a Saudi driver would run over a foreigner, the judge would almost always acquit the driver even if he were at fault.

Why? Because the judge would reason that the foreigner wouldn't have been run over had he not come to Saudi Arabia.

* * *

That's why it pains me to see Fouzi Bondagjy, a Saudi job recruiter who's the subject of many complaints of illegal recruitment, strutting around like he's the lord and master of this country. This Arab has filed libel complaints against this writer, the INQUIRER publisher and editor-in-chief because of the unflattering reports about him in this column.

Bondagjy's Filipino wife, a Binibining Pilipinas title holder in the 1980s, left him because she could no longer stand the maltreatment she suffered at the hands of this man. Bondagjy tried to force the woman to reconcile with him by invoking a Shari'ah or Muslim law that says the husband has complete control over his wife.

Bondagjy is trying to get even because I advised the woman not to submit herself to the Shari'ah.

* * *

Policy holders of the preneed company, College Assurance Plan (CAP), need not worry because the company is liquid, according to officials of the embattled firm.

In a press statement sent to different media outlets, CAP said it had increased its capitalization from P300 million to P8 billion. The increased capitalization is in the form of land titles. The titles cover 2,900 hectares of land valued at P6 billion per evaluation of an appraiser accredited with the Securities and Exchange Commission, according to the firm.

Last Tuesday, CAP signed with an investor, First American Investments, and the trustee bank, Philippine Veterans Bank, a memorandum of agreement and loan agreement where CAP would be able to convert to cash some of its trust fund assets by way of a loan package of $300 million. Proceeds would go toward the payment of planholder benefits.

This columnist welcomed the CAP report. I bought a CAP education plan for my niece two years ago.

Antipolo inmates move to new jail

By Luige A. del Puerto

SIX HUNDRED inmates of the Antipolo City jail have moved to their new quarters at the P18-million prison complex.

The third floor of the three-story building, located in Barangay San Jose, also serves as headquarters of the local police. The jail occupies the first and second floors.

"I wish all jails could be like this," Jail Warden Supt. Ignacio Panti told the INQUIRER shortly before the inaugural rites yesterday. "Congestion is a 'normal' problem in most prisons. We are very lucky."

In Metro Manila, inmates have resorted to sleeping in "shifts" because there is only enough room to stand up. Last year, one prisoner in another city died after the summer heat triggered an asthma attack. Prison officials blamed his death on poor ventilation.

Panti, who had lobbied for the building of the new jail last year, also disclosed that the inmates would be getting scabies treatments for three days starting Monday.

"We built the new building for humanitarian reasons," Mayor Angelito Gatlabayan said. "We cannot just allow inmates to die of diseases that are easily spread because of congestion."

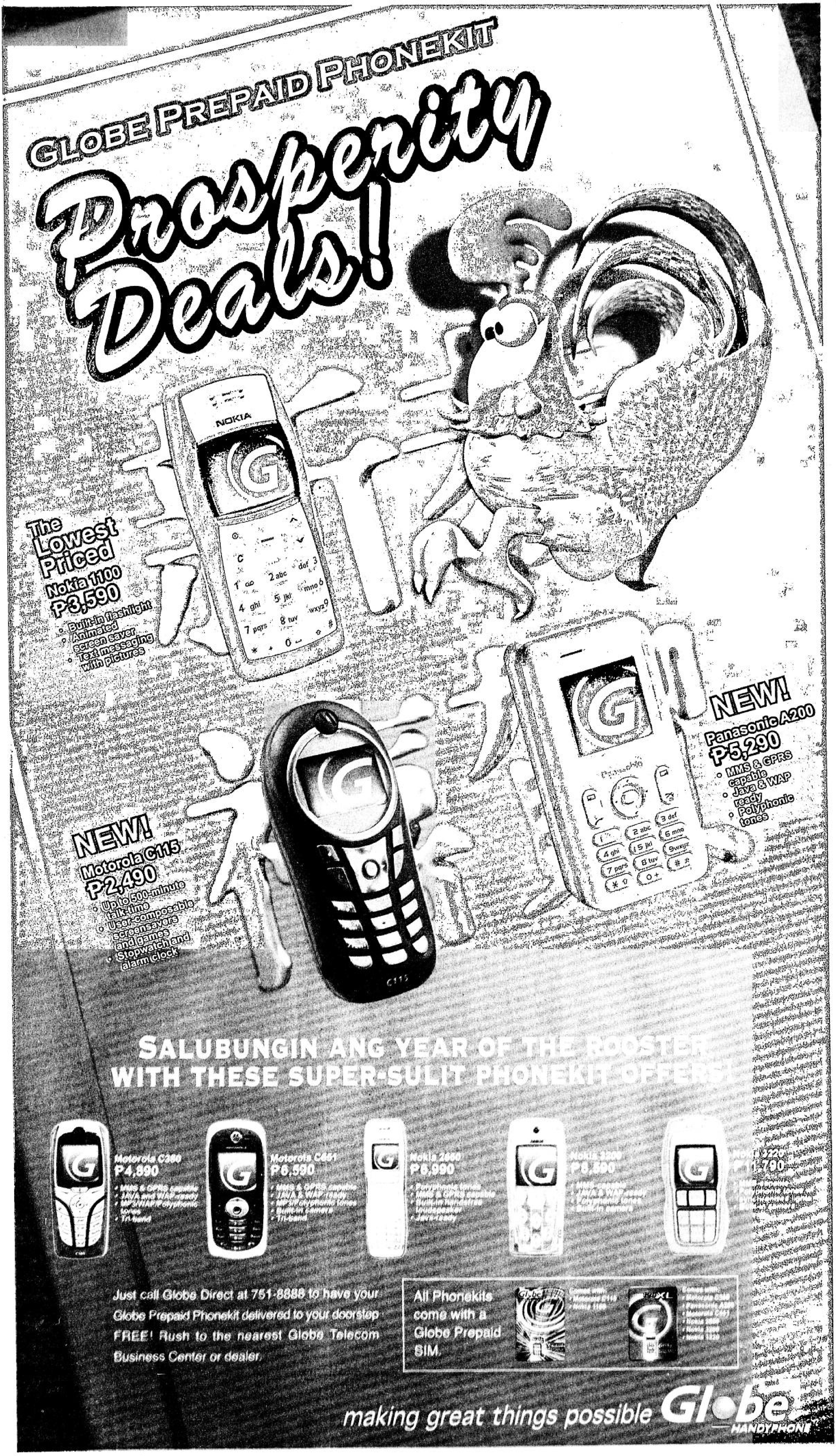
Thirty-one inmates diagnosed with tuberculosis would be transferred to a separate cell to ensure that the disease does not spread.

The old city jail had been holding six times the ideal number of inmates, making it a fertile breeding ground for communicable diseases.

Well ventilated, the new complex can accommodate at least 1,500 persons.

The new building is also equipped with a sun deck, a mess hall, a kitchen, three-deck beds, and quarters for jail guards.

Men and women inmates stay in separate wards, while minors and hardened criminals were assigned to special cells.



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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangulat

TENNIS: 2005 Australian Open Women's Finals and Men's Doubles Finals; 10:25 a.m. (r-4 p.m.); Day 13 Highlights; 8 p.m.: STAR Sports—See which female crowns herself queen of the year's first Grand Slam event and which male duo captures the title.
BASKETBALL: NBA-Sixers vs Hornets; 9 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports; Rockets vs Kings; 10:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); ESPN—Philadelphia takes on New Orleans in the east while Houston and Sacramento battle in the west.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS

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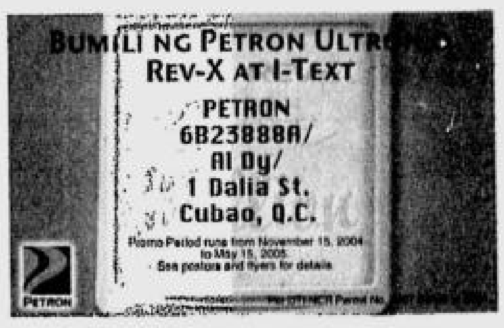

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Gonzalez slams QC court ruling

'Interference on Taulava's suspension'

By Philip C. Tubeza

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday slammed a recent Quezon City court verdict allowing Talk 'N Text cager Asi Taulava to play again in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Gonzalez said the decision of the QC Regional Trial Court Branch 222 is "questionable" and mocks the authority of the Department of Justice, which had found Taulava to have faked his Filipino citizenship.

"I do not feel bound by that," said Gonzalez of the new court ruling. "This department questions the undue interference by the courts in the cases of these so-called 'Fil-shams,'" Gonzalez said.

Taulava is one of the six players who, a Senate committee said, faked their citizenship papers to be able to play in the PBA.

In October, Gonzalez ordered the Bureau of Immigration to deport the other five—Davonn Harp, Jon Ordonio and Mick Pennisi of Red Bull, Rudy Hatfield of Coca-Cola and Alex Crisano of Barangay Ginebra—after the DOJ determined that they had faked their citizenship.

Gonzalez also ordered Taulava's banishment, but the deportation proceedings against the player were "held in abeyance unless and until" the injunction issued by the Manila court was lifted.

Gonzalez informed PBA commissioner Noli Eala in a letter yesterday that they had appealed to the Court of Appeals to lift the Manila court injunction.

The Justice chief said the court ruling "therefore, [is] not yet final and executory and sub-judice."

"The DOJ acted clearly within its authority in its quasi-judicial capacity on the issue of Mr. Taulava's citizenship," he said.

Gonzalez cited Supreme Court rulings which held that decisions of administrative agencies like the DOJ, which are "called upon to enforce and apply laws intrinsic to their functions, carry weight and should not be disregarded by the courts of justice."

"I will not belabor on all the issues except to state that the DOJ is questioning the decision of the [Manila court] and should have intervened in the Quezon City court had it been notified and given the opportunity to do so," Gonzalez said.

"Unfortunately, the DOJ nor the Bureau of Immigration were never impleaded. This department stands foursquare on its jurisdiction over Mr. Taulava and the deportation proceedings against him will proceed at the proper time," he added.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Hewitt roars to finals /A28
■ Pistons win 'brawl reunion 2' /A29

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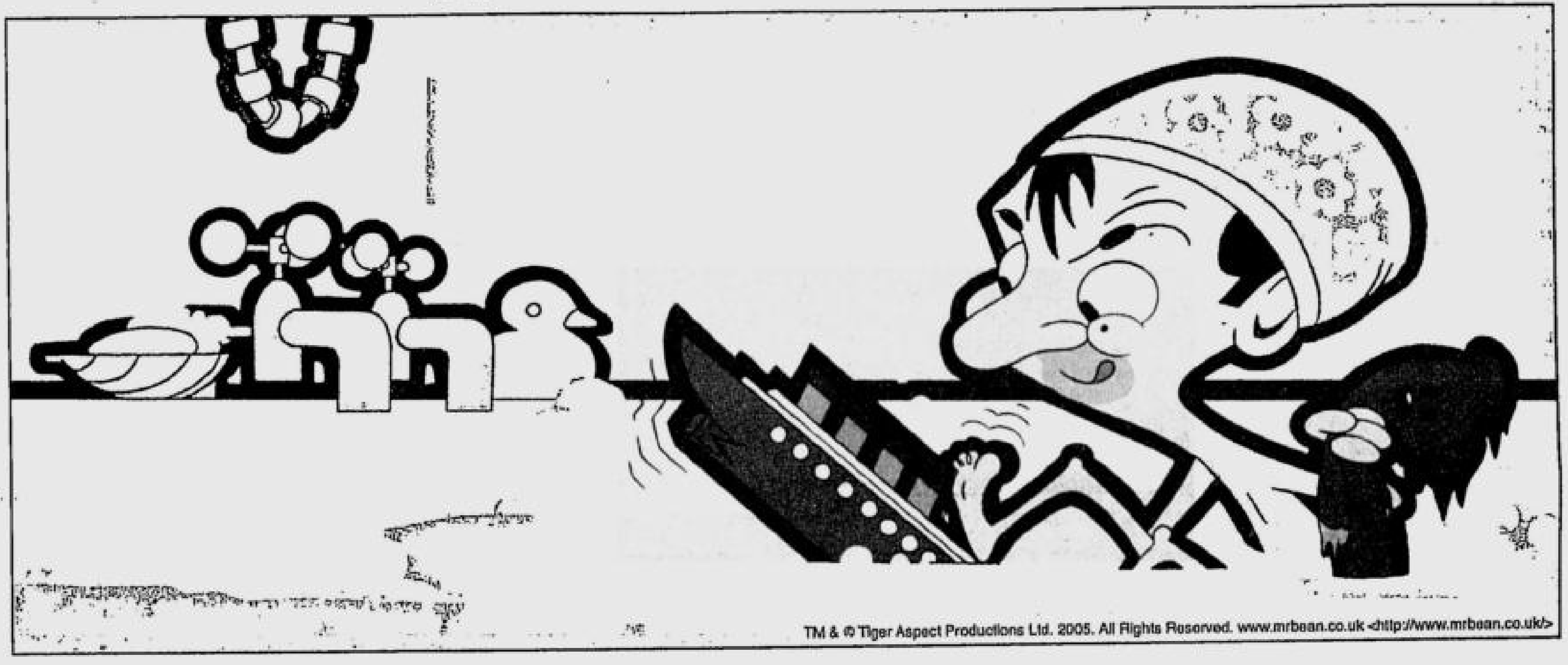

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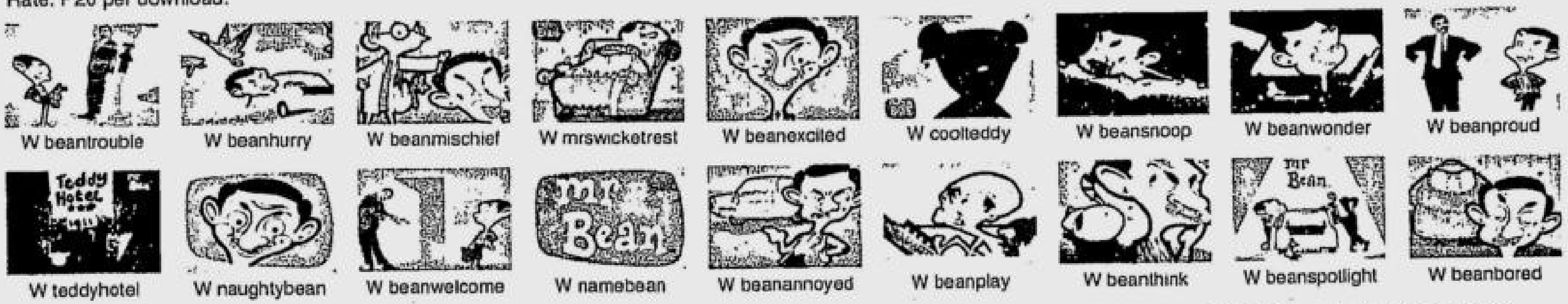

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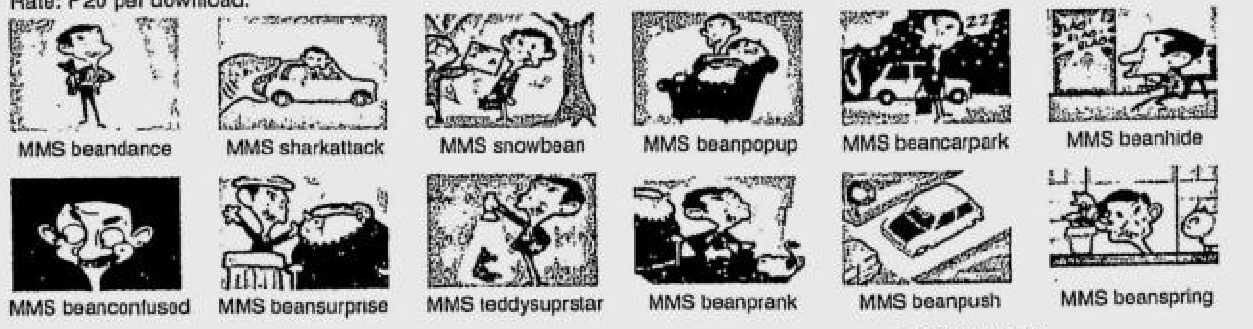

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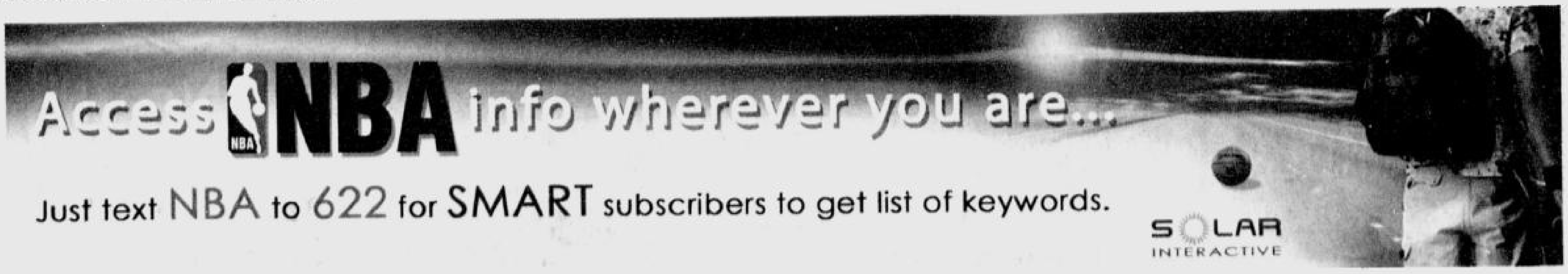

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WORLD CUP: Claudio Bosia of Italy competes in the mogul competition during the Chevrolet Freestyle International World Cup, Jan. 27 at Deer Valley Resort in Utah. AFP

T'Chargers rise from the depths

By June Navarro

ASK anyone in the Shell franchise about the formula of the team's amazing rise and they will look to Coach Leo Austria.

Unassuming as he is, though, Austria will be the last to attribute Shell's new-found confidence to himself and his coaching staff.

After Austria and his deputies took over the Shell reins halfway through the PBA Fiesta Cup last conference, things began to brighten up for the Turbochargers.

The rookie PBA mentor insists that his crew of hard-working players have transformed the Turbochargers from a perennial tailender to title contender.

"I just installed the system but they (players) are the ones who made it work," said Austria, who steered Shell to the semifinals again after six forgettable conferences.

Talk 'N Text swept Shell in their best-of-five semifinal series, but advancing to the semifinals was already an achievement for a team which had not been in the playoffs since the 2001 Governors Cup.

AUSTRIA

With the help of his dynamic assistants Dayong Mendoza and Bogs Adornado, Austria led the Turbochargers to their best elimination-round record—12-6—in years.

Austria, however, is not one to rest on his laurels.

A rookie of the year in 1984 while playing for Shell, Austria sees bigger challenges ahead for the Turbochargers.

"There's still a lot of things we could improve on," he said. "As long as the players believe in themselves, we can achieve more."

Austria said complementing the court leadership of Chris Jackson with a couple of veteran players will be one of priorities.

"Veteran players know what to do, especially in tight situations in the endgame," said Austria.

The Turbochargers were close to snatching victories in Games 2 and 3 of their series with the Phone Pals but fumbled against their rivals' more experienced players in the final minute.

Shell makes no secret about its intention to sign up Barangay Ginebra's Romel Adducul as well as Alaska's Don Allado or Coca-Cola's Poch Juinio to beef up the team's young frontline and provide stability during tense endgames.

M. Lhuillier, Quezon clash for title

CEBU CITY—M. Lhuillier-Cebu City Jewelers overpowered China's Fujian province selection, 114-89, Thursday night to complete a five-game sweep of the eliminations and arrange a title showdown with the Quezon Coco Huskers in the Mayor Tomas Osmeña Sinulog Invitational Cup at the New Cebu City Coliseum here.

The Quezon cagers scored a resounding 91-75 victory over the Cebuana Lhuillier-backed RP Training Team and advanced to last night's championship match on a stroke of luck.

South Korea's Konkuk University gave the Huskers an unexpected boost, knocking the North Cotabato Braves out of contention via a 92-88 overtime decision.

The Coco-Huskers and the Nationals wound up with identical 3-2 cards but Quezon made it to the title clash by virtue of the winner-over-the-other rule.

Quezon and fellow URBL squad M. Lhuillier-Cebu City were still playing at press time.

The Koreans' stunning win averted a possible three-way tie for the last finals berth in the tournament organized by the city government of Cebu and the Cebu City Sports Commission in cooperation with the Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) and the United Regional Basketball League.

The Koreans and the Braves wound up with similar 2-3 cards but the former made it to the battle for third place against the Nationals by virtue of the winner-over-the-other rule.

The defeat floored the Braves, who rallied from 10 points down in the final period to force the extra period at 79-all.

The Huskers, with reinforcement Jeff Flowers and chief gunner Mike Manigo, team captain Buboy Rodriguez and Richard Hardin playing true to form, raced to a double-digit lead early in the first half and never let up.

Flowers finished with 27 points, Manigo scored 18 and Hardin and Rodriguez chipped in 14 apiece.

Quezon coach Francis Rodriguez praised his crew, formed four days before the tournament, for their hard work.

Niño Cañaleta paced the Nationals with 18 points.

The Huskers, riding high on their third win in a row, are hoping to avenge their 104-92 defeat at the hand of the Jewelers Monday night.

The scores.

M. LHUILLIER 114 – Grice 22, Ocañada 20, L Garcia 14, Cañoneo 13, Aying 12, Piodo 11, Caputolan 8, Parks 7, Lumantas 5, Dacia 2.

CHINA 89 – Chen 19, Huang 17, Ding 17, Honglong 14, Zhai 14, Wang 8.

Quarterscores: 24-20, 55-39, 82-65, 114-89.

Patriots ambush Flaming Arrows

THE LA SALLE-DASMARIÑAS Patriots shackled the Arellano University Flaming Arrows in the last six minutes for an 83-76 victory yesterday in the 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball quarterfinals at the Pasay Sports Complex.

They turned the tables around with a sudden change in defense, which eventually allowed the Patriots to notch their fourth win in six games.

The Flaming Arrows sank lower in the standings at 3-3 with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines Maroons, who caught up with them following a 91-77 crushing of the Colegio de San Lorenzo Griffins.

The Griffins share the same record with the Patriots and the Rizal Technological University Technocrats at second.

Haddi Porto exploded with 12 of his 17 points in the fourth period, and hit six points in fueling a decisive breakaway in the last 5:38.

John Edward Macalma also made 17 points, enabling the Patriots to go up, 71-68.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE
Saturday, January 29, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Ex Channel		Y Speak		Nginig: The Hidden Files		TBA		TV Patrol	Magandang Gabi Bayan		Star Cinema Presents			Home Along The Airport		Kontrobersyal		Sports Unlimited
NBN	Value Vision		Value Vision					Collegiate Champions League		Yan Ang Pinoy		Search For The 1st Tanduay Billiards Player		Mosconi Cup 2004					
ABC 5	Smart TV	The Basketball Show		Soccer Showdown		Loren		Dvotsahan		Hotshots				Sing Galing		Maverick & Ariel	Saan Nagtatago Ang Pag-ibig		
GMA 7	Startalk			Wish Ko Lang	Wag Kukurap (4:45 PM)		Pinoy Pop Superstar		Bitoy's Funniest Videos		Extra Challenge	Imbestigador (8:15 PM)			Idol Ko Si Kap			Game Face In Concert	
RPN 9		Biyaheng Langit	Bayan I-Text Mo Resbo		Kids TV	Hanapbuhay Overseas		Isumbong mo kay Tulfo		7 Days		JAG		Breakfast Of Champions					
IBC 13		Home Shopping Network		Global Family Songs		Home Shopping Network		Amerika Atbp.		V League				Brag		In This Corner		Ugnayang Pambansa	
Solar	Tough Enough	WWE Bottomline		Wwe Raw				Wwe Heat		Wow		Slamball		UFC Recall				Thunder Box	
Nickelodeon	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	As Told By Ginger	All Grown Up	My Dad The Rock Star	Drake & Josh	Yakkity Yak	Danny Phantom	My Life As A Teenage Robot	SpongeBob SquarePants	Fairly Odd Parents	Sabrina, The Teenage Witch	Romeo	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Hey Arnold!	The Wild Thornberrys
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Presents		Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Club MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX		MYX Live!	
ETC		Dateline		The Today Show		Saturday Night Live		NBC Nightly News	Knock First	One Tree Hill		Queer Eye For A Straight Guy		Saturday Night Live		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Cinema One	Sana Bukas Pa Ang Kahapon				Kapalit Ng Isang Awit				My Movie				Walang Karugtong Ang Nakaraan		Otso-Otso, Pamela-Mela Wan				
Studio 23								Sports TV	Game Plan	7th Heaven	Boston Public	Gilmore Girls			Studio 23 Present				Reel Deal
AXN			Bet Your Life				Hollywood's Greatest Stunts	The Right Stuff II	Rated X	Now See This	Now See This	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		Jakob The Liar			
Star World	Action Man	Totally Outrageous Behavior Caught On Tape	When Hidden Cameras Attack	Miami Vice		Adventure Inc		Roswell		Dark Angel		TNA Wrestling/ One Night Only! Rod Stewart In Concert		When Good Pets Go Bad 1/ Saturday Shockumentaries		Coupling/ Dog The Bounty Hunter	Absolute Power/ Cops	The Kumars At No. 42	Goodness Gracious Me
CNN	Diplomatic License	World News	World Business This Week	World News	People In The News	Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	World News		World News	Design 360	World News	Talk Asia	World News	The Daily Show With John Stewart: Global Ed	World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Big Bite Night				Wild Life Adventure		Creature Feature				Saturday Unlimited				Big Bite Night			
Solar Sports		ATP Stockholm Open '04 Finals			Sounds of the Finals		Danish Open '04 Final WS			Greatest Classics				NBA Game: Philadelphia @ New Orleans					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Carol Duvall	HGTV Special		Radical Sabbatical	Road & Track	Genuine Article	Food Fight	Date Plate	Emeril Live		Nigella Bites	Brini Maxwell Show	Royalty A-Z		Modern Girl's Guide	E! True Hollywood Story		Look For Less	Behind The Velvet Ropes
HBO				Superman II (3:55 PM)				When In Rome (6:05 PM)			Ballistic: Ecks Vs. Sever			Empire			Hulk (10:35PM)		
Star Movies				Swimfan			Stuart Little			Road To Perdition				Signs			Visitors (10:45PM)		
Cartoon Network		The Detective Squad	Tom & Jerry Show	Swat Kats	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Justice League	Atomic Betty	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	Xiaolin Showdown			The Looney Tunes Show	Cartoon Cartoon Show	Power Rangers Wild Force	Zoids: Fuzors	Time Squad	Harvey Birdman (11:15PM)	Justice League
Disney Channel	Potatoes And Dragons	Sabrina's Secret Life	The Legend Of Tarzan	Wicked Science	Viva S Club	Martin Mystery/ That's So Raven/Dave The Barbarian/ Phil Of The Future				Lizzie Mcguire	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	And The Band Played On (2:45 PM)					Cinema Secrets III Ep 9: Animals Gone Wild	Thrill Seekers (5:45 PM)			Changing Lanes (7:15 PM)				Accidental Hero				Deadly Voyage (10:55PM)	
Hallmark Channel		Five Days To Midnight				La Femme Musketeer				La Femme Musketeer				Five Days To Midnight			Midsomer Murders Judgement Day		
Discovery Channel		Human Discovery		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimate	Unsolved History				Wild Discovery				Rides		The New Detectives		Extreme Discovery	
MTV Philippines		Non-Stop Hits		One Bad Trip	Cribs	MTV Rockd	Globally Dismissed	MTV Upgraded	Non-Stop Hits	MTV Screen	MTV Urban Beats	Spring Break	Non-Stop Hits	MTV Diyes		Non-Stop Hits		VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus			Acc Basketball: Nrth Carolina @ Maryland					This Is The PGA Tour		Monster Jam		Freestyle Motocross		Nopi Tunerversion	Bikini Destination	Golf Academy 2002	Bob Hope Chrysler Classic 3rd rd		
EWTN	Defending Life	Angelus (3:15PM)	G.K. Chesterton	My Little Angels	The Donut Man	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Black And Roman Catholic	Catholic Compass		The World Over		Fr. John Corapi		Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	The Church And Culture Today	Life on The Rock Encore	

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CHAMPION: Junichi Miyashita of Japan starts to win the men's 50-m backstroke final in the Fina Swimming World Cup in Moscow, Jan. 27.

AFP

Gonzales, Dableo seeded in national chess tourney

GRANDMASTER-candidates Jayson Gonzales and Ronald Dableo have been seeded into the finals of the 2005 National Chess Championships.

Taking note of their achievements, the National Chess Federation of the Philippines board of directors yesterday granted their requests that they be granted the same privilege as GMs Eugene Torre, Joey Antonio, Bong Villamayor and Nelson Mariano II and GM-candidate Mark Paragua.

The 33-year-old Gonzales emerged as the highest scorer (6 wins, 4 draws, 1 loss) of the Philippine Team in the 36th Chess Olympiad in Calvia, Mallorca, Spain, where they shared 12th to 19th places out-of-128 teams last October. He ranked sixth in the medal standing in board 4 and No. 39 in the individual overall standings.

After the Olympiad, Gonzales got his first GM title norm by finishing third in the 1st Calvia Open last Nov.1-9.

"I would like to thank the NCFP board of directors for their recognition of my achievements and my contributions to Philippine Chess," said Gonzales.

Dableo is the reigning Asian 3.2a zonal champion and, like Gonzales, was also a member of the triumphant RP Chess Team to the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games. Both are members of the Tagaytay City-RP Chess Team that won the 14th Asian Cities Chess Team Championship last year.

Also discussed on the meeting presided by NCFP president Go Teng Kok were the status of Paragua's GM application, the staging of International Grandmaster Chess Classic Tournament, local tournaments and the preparation for the SEA Games.

The NCFP board had earlier junked "the traditional outright seeding system," leaving the seeded players no option but to pit their skills against the qualifiers in the national finals which will select the members of the RP team to the Manila SEAG. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

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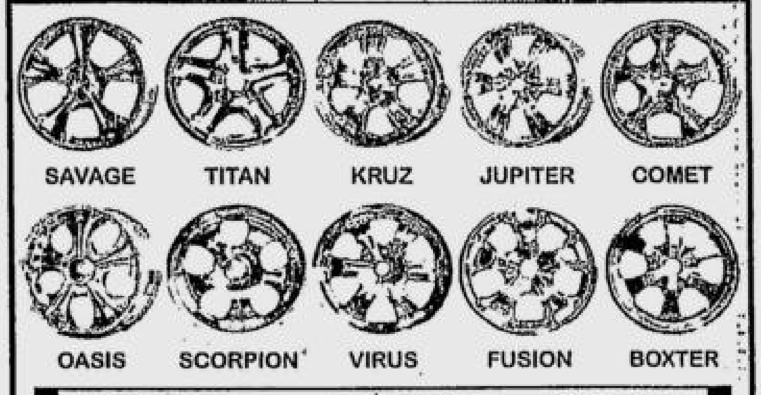

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Stephen notches 5th win

DEFENDING champion St. Stephen High School continued its winning ways, pulling a lopsided 96-60 triumph over host Chiang Kai Shek College recently in the 29th Hitachi-Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball League at the Chiang Kai Shek Gym.

It was the fifth straight win for St. Stephen after earlier routing Hope Christian High School, 82-43.

Ralph Cua sparked the big win with 15 points, 12 of which is in the first half that gave St. Stephen a 26-point spread, 56-30. From then on, it was smooth sailing for the Goldwyn Monteverde-mentored squad.

Xavier School remained second overall with a 3-1 card following a 73-66 victory over Chiang Kai Shek. Walter Co steered the victory with a double-double performance of 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Highlights of the games will be aired over IBC-13 tomorrow, Sunday, 3-5 p.m.

UNO High School also turned back Hope Christian High School, 66-56, to move up to third overall with a 2-3 card. Andrei Tanlo scored 19 points as UNO High stepped on the gas and took a 20-7 first quarter lead.

Nat'l coach quits over feud with PBA officials

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NATIONAL badminton coach Valentin "Butch" Oreta resigned yesterday, citing differences with certain officials of the Philippine Badminton Association.

Oreta claimed he could not implement his training program because the association's board of directors "want their own people to be in the coaching staff."

The 55-year-old coach said he tendered his resignation to PBA president and former First Lady Ming Ramos.

"Where can you find a national coach without an assistant coach?" Oreta told the Inquirer. "They want to put people in the coaching staff who, unfortunately, don't follow me.'"

Sources in the badminton association said Oreta will be replaced by Errol Chan, the PBA's grassroots development chief, who is reportedly close to PBA secretary general Jorge Piano.

Oreta complained that the board also refused to approve his method of charting the progress of the national team.

"Charting or recording is basic in coaching," he said. "I don't know why they don't want it.'"

Oreta's resignation left the country's badminton preparations for this year's Southeast Asian Games in disarray, although he said he has been visiting the Rizal Memorial Badminton Hall despite packing up weeks earlier.

"I don't want to do this but they have tied my hands," said Oreta referring to the PBA board, whose members include Mrs. Ramos, Piano, police Director General Edgar Aglipay, the executive vice president, and treasurer Rod Tan-Gapue.

Oreta, a member of the national team from 1965 to 1986 and a back-to-back US Open seniors champion, was tapped to handle the RP team in 2002.

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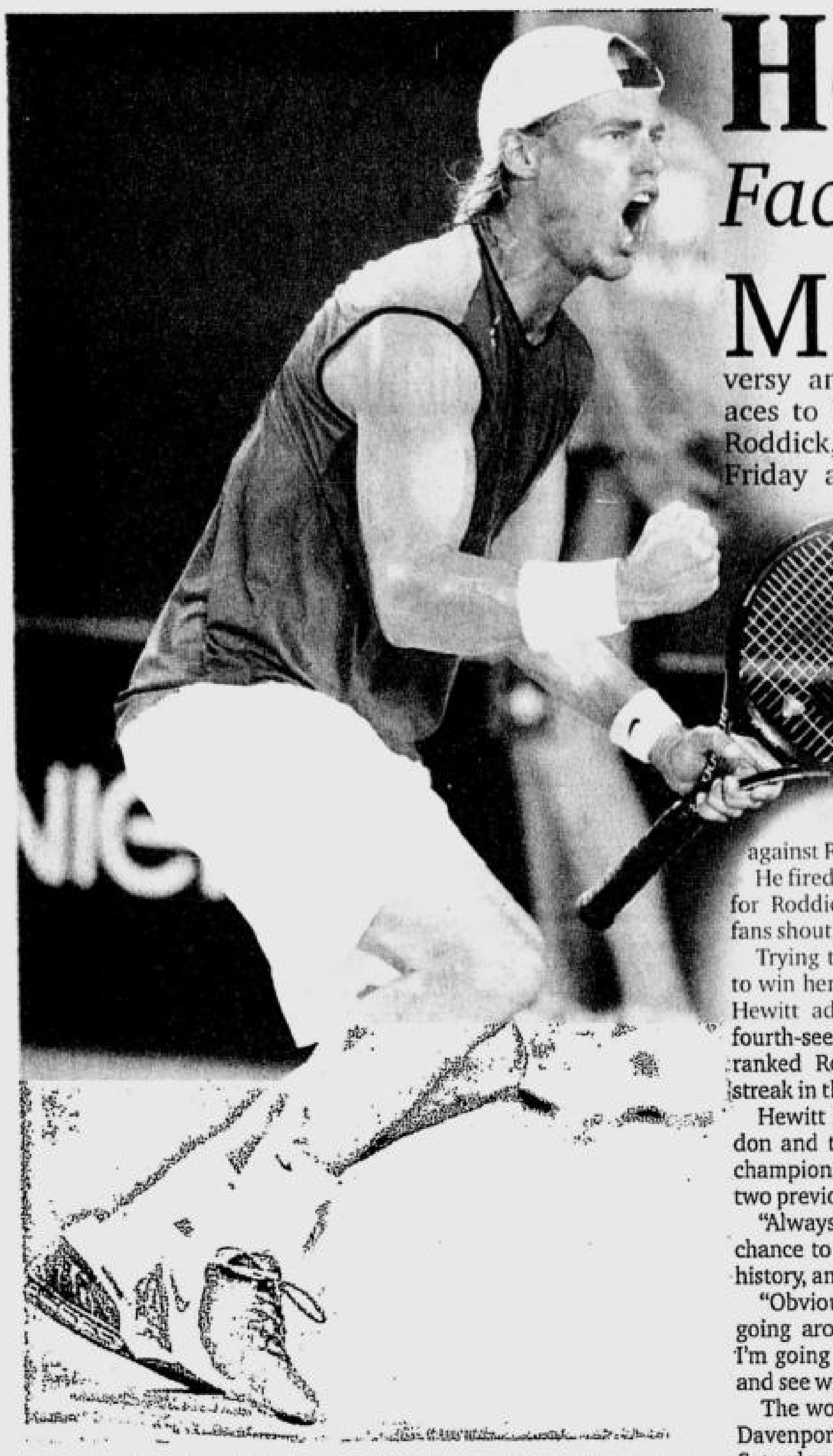


WITH another splendid and gutsy performance, Lleyton Hewitt gives himself a shot at ending an Australian drought. REUTERS

Hewitt roars to finals

Faces Safin for Australian Open trophy

MELBOURNE, Australia—Lleyton Hewitt, who seems to feed off controversy and adversity, endured 31 aces to beat second-seeded Andy Roddick, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 6-1, Friday and advance to the Australian Open final.

Third-ranked Hewitt, the "Aussie battler" who complained before the tournament about the courts being slow and has angered three opponents with his loud shouts to pump himself up, was at his aggressive, fist-pumping best against Roddick.

He fired up the crowd, which was too vocal for Roddick's tastes—he complained about fans shouting during his service motion.

Trying to become the first Australian man to win here since Mark Edmondson in 1976, Hewitt advanced to Sunday's final against fourth-seeded Marat Safin. Safin ended top-ranked Roger Federer's 26-match winning streak in the other semifinal.

Hewitt has won major titles from Wimbledon and the US Open. Safin won the 2000 championship at the US Open and has lost two previous finals here at Melbourne Park.

"Always said I'd do anything to have a chance to play in the first night final here in history, and I've got my chance," Hewitt said.

"Obviously, Marat's beaten the best player going around. He's playing extremely well. I'm going to have to raise my level yet again and see what happens."

The women's final pits top-ranked Lindsay Davenport against No. 7 Serena Williams on Saturday.

Roddick came out hot, jumping ahead at 2-0. He converted his fourth breakpoint opportunity when Hewitt hit long on a forehand from Roddick that was called good but TV replays indicated was just long.

As he has done so often, Roddick relied on his blistering serve to get out of early trouble. He had six aces as he served at 5-3, using them to fend off four of Hewitt's five break points in the game, then finish off the set with another two.

Roddick made it seven aces in a row with four in the next game. But Hewitt had only three unforced errors in the second set, which saw the first appearance of his trademark "Come on!" while pointing his fingers at his forehead in the 16th game—much later than usual.

Hewitt still needed a tiebreaker—Roddick had won all three that they had played despite's the Australian's 4-1 record in head-to-head meetings—to even the match. Hewitt had the only ace to pull ahead, 6-3, and Roddick netted a backhand on the next point.

Roddick went ahead in the third set when Hewitt double-faulted at break point. But serving at 4-2, 30-30, Roddick—clearly trying to put a little extra on his second serve—double-faulted twice to return the favor. He had only six double-faults in the previous five matches, but had nine against Hewitt.

At the changeover, Roddick complained to chair umpire Andrea Egli about fans calling out during his service motion.

When Egli indicated he couldn't control everyone in the crowd, Roddick responded: "You're telling me I can have someone shout during every one of his serves and you can't do anything about it?"

He complained again in the next game after someone shouted as he served at 40-0 after his 27th ace.

Another tiebreaker, and Hewitt peaked at the right time again. From 4-4, he ran off the last three points, the last a backhand cross-court pass. Hewitt leaned low and pumped his fist three times with another "Come on!"

Hewitt, who has been nursing sore thighs, had spent 14 1/2 hours on court—twice as long as Roddick—over of his previous five matches, including a four-hour, five-setter in the quarterfinals. But he still looked strong at the end, breaking an increasingly downcast Roddick for the first time while jumping ahead, 3-0, in the fourth set.

Another break followed to make it 5-1, and Hewitt held for the match when Roddick sent a service return long.

Hewitt dropped to his knees, kissed the court and hit a ball high into the air as the crowd roared.

Meanwhile, It wasn't the title each had most hoped for, but US Open champion Svedana Kuznetsova and Australia's Alicia Molik won the Australian Open women's doubles championship Friday with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Americans Lindsay Davenport and Corina Morariu.

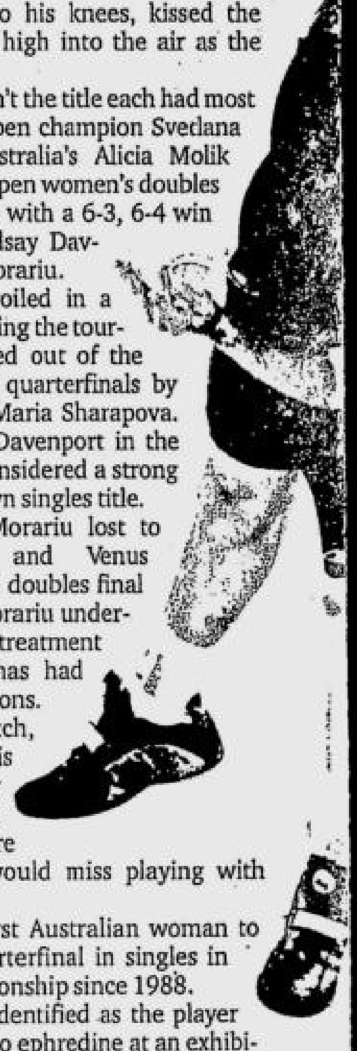
Kuznetsova, embroiled in a drug controversy during the tournament, was knocked out of the singles draw in the quarterfinals by Russian compatriot Maria Sharapova. Molik, who lost to Davenport in the quarterfinals, was considered a strong hope for a homegrown singles title.

Davenport and Morariu lost to Serena Williams and Venus Williams in the 2001 doubles final here. In between, Morariu underwent chemotherapy treatment for leukemia and has had two shoulder operations.

Before the match, Davenport, who is carrying a minor thigh injury ahead of the final, said there was no way she would miss playing with Morariu again.

Molik was the first Australian woman to advance to the quarterfinal in singles in her national championship since 1988.

Kuznetsova was identified as the player who tested positive to ephredine at an exhibition tournament in Belgium in December. *AP*



Hingis comeback possible

LONDON—Martina Hingis is planning a comeback and the world of tennis is delighted.

Hingis initially claimed her appearance at a low-key tournament in Pattaya next week was a one-off appearance to support the deprived children of Thailand.

The Swiss has since acknowledged that a good performance might well persuade her to return full-time to the circuit she left, broken in body and spirit, two years ago.

Her retirement aged just 22 ended one of the most spectacular rises and equally dramatic falls in tennis history.

At 16, Hingis was on top of the world, the youngest winner of a grand slam last century, the youngest world number one and the holder of the Australian, Wimbledon and US Open titles.

She compensated for her lack of height with superb court craft, great timing and an indomitable will, a combination which crushed the life out of her opponents. And she did it all with a smile on her face.

What she had not reckoned on was the Williams sisters.

First Venus, then Serena blew holes in Hingis' game plan with huge groundstrokes and her mental strength began to melt down under the onslaught.

"The game was getting more and more physical, especially when the Williams sisters came in," Hingis said last June. "I had to up my regime and go and work out."

Hingis had resolutely knocked back suggestions she would like to return to tennis, calling it "inconceivable."

"I was really sad and disappointed when she stopped so young and so early," said Lindsay Davenport.

"I always thought it was sad that she retired in the first place," added Venus Williams.

In December, however, she announced that she planned to play in Pattaya although a comeback was firmly ruled out.

Earlier this month, Hingis admitted she was using the tournament as a test of her ability to play full-time again.

"It will depend on how my body reacts. But one thing is clear, I still love tennis." *Reuters*

LINDSAY Davenport (left) gives an emotion-filled tribute to her partner and compatriot, Corina Morariu, who wipes a tear from her eyes after their women's doubles final loss. AP

Davenp

MELBOURNE—World No.
Lindsay Davenport broke d
in tears at the Australian Ope
Friday as she paid tribute to
doubles partner, Corina Mor
three and a half years after
26-year-old was diagnosed
leukemia.

Davenport and Morariu
beaten, 6-3, 6-4, by sixth
Svetlana Kuznetsova and
tralian Alicia Molik in the fin
the women's doubles on Friday
Davenport said she was just th
ful that her partner had been
to make a full recovery.

"Four years ago, my partner
rina, and I stood here after los
tough three-set match," she tol
crowd.

"But about four months la
got a call from her parents t
me that Corina was in a late

Brady says he's not yet a Montana

FOXBORO, Massachusetts—Tom Brady used to play in his driveway 32 km (20 miles) south of San Francisco and pretend he was Joe Montana. He even tried to spot the 49ers' quarterback at Super Bowl victory parades.

Today, Brady is often compared to the Hall of Famer, and children look up to the New England Patriots star the way he did to Montana.

"It's really neat on Halloween when you see those jerseys," Brady said on Thursday. "I had a little kid come up to my door with a No. 12 (Brady) jersey on. It's like, 'Oh, man.' It's just come such a long way."

From part-time starter at the University of Michigan to sixth-round draft choice to two-time Super Bowl MVP, Brady has made huge strides in a hurry. He's just 27, but is in position to help the Patriots become only the second team to win three Super Bowls in four years.

But he's still behind Montana's four Super Bowl wins and eight Pro Bowl selections. Brady, headed to his second Pro Bowl, admits he's uncomfortable with the comparisons.

"I'm very flattered," Brady said. "I don't think I'm on that level [and] I'm still trying to get better."

But he's not easily distracted once he sets his goals.

He had a fever last weekend but still played brilliantly in the Patriots' 41-27 over the Pittsburgh Steelers in the AFC championship game. But he said he never came close to missing the game and downplayed the illness.

"There's a lot of guys who were sick and a lot of guys aren't feeling good and a lot of guys are probably playing with tougher ailments than I was," Brady said. "Guys have been doing that all year." *AP*

9-year-old attracts football clubs

SAO PAULO, Brazil—Top European clubs—including Manchester United—have shown interest in a 9-year-old "super talented" Brazilian soccer player, the boy's club said Thursday.

Jean Carlos Chera, who weighs only 35 kilograms (77 pounds) and is 1.37 meters tall (4-foot-6), currently plays for the youth squads of Associacao Desportiva Atletica, a small club in the southern state of Parana.

The boy's above-average talent caused furor locally and quickly caught the attention of several European teams.

"Seven or eight European clubs have already contacted us to know more about Jean," Adilson Batista Prado, the club's president, told The Associated Press by phone. "They want to know what he is all about, and I tell them he's a phenomenon, probably the best player to come out of Brazil."

Prado and team officials would not identify all the clubs interested in Jean, but confirmed that representatives of Manchester United have asked for videotapes of his matches.

Prado also confirmed teams from Portugal, France and Germany have made contact, and according to local media, FC Porto is one of them.

The club said the European sides haven't made offers yet, but some have asked for permission to send representatives, and others have invited the young midfielder and his family to Europe.

Prado said the club has been very careful negotiating with the teams and dealing with the media to preserve the boy.

"He still needs to be a kid," said Prado, who does not allow Jean to talk to reporters.

The furor over Jean began after the club uploaded videos with highlights of Jean's matches on its website. In the videos, Jean is seen scoring goals from midfield, dribbling past several defenders and playing among 13- and 14-year-olds.

After the videos were posted, the site's page views nearly tripled and some of them had to be removed to keep the site from crashing, the club said.

Local media also has hailed Jean's talent, but some soccer commentators share the club's concern.

"There's no doubt he's a super talented boy, but that cannot keep him from being a kid," said ESPN Brasil's Antero Greco. "If the club and the family are not careful dealing with this situation, Jean's talent may be spoiled and lost."

Jean is one of the youngest players to grab the attention from European clubs. *AP*

Ordinary Joe takes Bob Hope lead

LA QUINTA, California—Joe Ogilvie believed there would be some low scores in the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic but he surprised even himself with a 9-under 63 on Thursday to lead after two rounds.

"You look at the history of golf; I don't think I'm going to be in any encyclopedias of golf," Ogilvie said.

Ogilvie grabbed a three-stroke lead, with defending champion Phil Mickelson in pursuit. Mickelson, who also won the 2002 Hope, shot a 64 to tie for second at 14 under with Fredrik Jacobson of Sweden, who had a second-round 62—the best round of the tournament so far.

Fred Couples and Billy Mayfair were in a group of five at 13 under, four shots off the pace. Couples had a 66 and Mayfair a 64.

Ogilvie began the five-day tournament with a 64, and was at 17-under 127 for two rounds, the third most shots below par through 36 holes in PGA Tour history.

Tom Lehman was 19 under after two rounds at Las Vegas in 2001, and Joe Durant was 18 under on his way to winning the Hope earlier that year. Lehman's 125 total ties him with Tiger Woods and Mark Calcavecchia for low 36-hole score, with Woods' coming on a par-70 course and Calcavecchia's on a par-71 layout.

Players rotate among four different courses for the first four days of the 90-hole tournament, with some of the layouts more difficult.

"Mickelson shot a 64 today at La Quinta," said Ogilvie, who had his 63 at Bermuda Dunes. "I'd say technically he's probably leading. Score-wise, I am, but technically I'd say he's leading."

Mickelson said, "I feel like I'm three back."

He was very complimentary.

"I have a lot of respect for Joe Ogilvie on and off the course," he said. "He's ready to win now, and it's going to take all I can do to fight him off."

The 30-year-old Ogilvie is coming off a successful if unspectacular year on the tour. He earned $1.4 million, more than his previous four years combined. His best finish is a tie for second last year at New Orleans. *AP*

Delgado, Florida ink 4-year dea

NEW YORK—While Carlos Delgado fin
his $52-million, four-year deal with th
da Marlins on Thursday, Magglio Or
made a counteroffer to the Detroit Tige
Barry Larkin said he was leaning tow
tirement.

Delgado, who accepted Florida's c
on Tuesday, said at his introductory new
ference that he will continue not to sta
ing the playing of "God Bless America."

The Puerto Rican infielder refused t
when "God Bless America" was play
season. Instead, he would stay on the
Blue Jays bench or go into the dugout

"I wouldn't call it politics, becaus
politics," Delgado said. "The reason
didn't stand for 'God Bless America'
cause I didn't like the way they tied 'G
America' and 9-11 to the war in Iraq
ball."

Marlins officials, who gave Delg
richest per-season contract in the tea
year history, made no objection to
protest.

"The Marlins don't support it, and
not support it," team president David
said. "He's an adult. The club's positio
what he does is up to him."

Ordonez, the last remaining prem
agent, told agent Scott Boras to m
counterproposal to Detroit. The Ven
outfielder met on Monday with Tiger
Mike Ilitch, team president Dave Dom
and manager Alan Trammell.

"Mike Ilitch indicated he was inte
making a move that would dramaticall
the franchise," Boras said.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ANDY Roddick's big service game failed to bail him out of trouble against Lleyton Hewitt's gallant stand. AFP

Serena: Federer's biggest fan

MELBOURNE, Australia—Serena Williams isn't just a tennis player, she's also a fan of the game—especially of top-ranked men's player Roger Federer.

So she was watching television nervously as Federer and Marat Safin played four hours Thursday night in a classic match that featured eight match points before the fourth-seeded Russian finally finished off the upset.

"I was dying," Williams said. "I couldn't watch at one more point. I turned (the channel) when Federer was down 5-2 in the fifth, and then I turned back, and I was like, 'Oh, I hate to see him lose.' I turned back, and it was 6-all. I'm like, Oh, my God. But then I turned again because I couldn't bear to watch."

Williams sounded like a charter member of the Swiss star's fan club.

"I think he's an amazing athlete, just his ability is second to none," she said. "I learn so much from his game. He's just so smooth and so solid, effortless. So I look for a lot of things from him."

Sharapova donates

Russia's Maria Sharapova has made a significant donation to the victims of last September's Beslan school siege in her homeland.

Wimbledon champion Sharapova on Friday donated the value of a Porsche car—her prize for winning the WTA Tour Championships in November—to those affected by the hostage crisis, in which more than 330 people, half of them children, died.

Sharapova was awarded a Porsche Cayenne S car, to be donated to the charity of her choice, following her win over Serena Williams in the season-ending championships.

She auctioned the vehicle, raising $56,300, and at a ceremony in Melbourne on Friday presented the proceeds to the Russian ambassador to Australia, Leonid P. Moiseev.

"Making this donation was the least that I could do to help the innocent victims in my country who were tragically affected by this senseless act," Sharapova. *AP*

Pistons win 'brawl reunion 2'

Spurs hand Kings another royal beating

INDIANAPOLIS—Chauncey Billups scored 20 points and Tayshaun Prince had 16 points and seven rebounds as the Detroit Pistons used a balanced scoring attack to defeat the Indiana Pacers 88-76 Thursday.

It was the second meeting between the teams since Nov. 19, when Pacers players brawled with Pistons fans after Ben Wallace shoved Ron Artest.

"We know what it takes to win games now," Wallace said. "We've been to the promised land and we know what it takes to get back there."

Thursday's game was full of emotion, too.

Indiana fans booed loudly as the Pistons were introduced and booed again each time Wallace scored. The game also was marred by five technical fouls, and fans jawed with Pistons players, sometimes playfully, in the final minutes of the game.

"I've got to stay positive with this group," Indiana coach Rick Carlisle said. "There are a lot of games to play and this team will get better."

Wallace finished with 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Bulls 101, Bobcats 93

In Chicago, Jannero Pargo scored all 14 of his points in the fourth quarter and Andres Nocioni added 17 points off the bench as Chicago got 63 points from its reserves to beat Charlotte.

Eric Piatkowski added 16 points for Chicago, which extended its winning streak to five games. The Bulls have won 12 of their last 13 games and eight straight at home.

The Bobcats have dropped 10 straight and have the NBA's worst road record, 1-18.

They have lost 16 of 17 overall since winning three of four games from Dec. 14-22.

It was the first meeting between former college teammates Emeka Okafor and Ben Gordon, who led Connecticut to the 2004 national championship and were taken with the second and third picks in the NBA draft, but neither stood out.

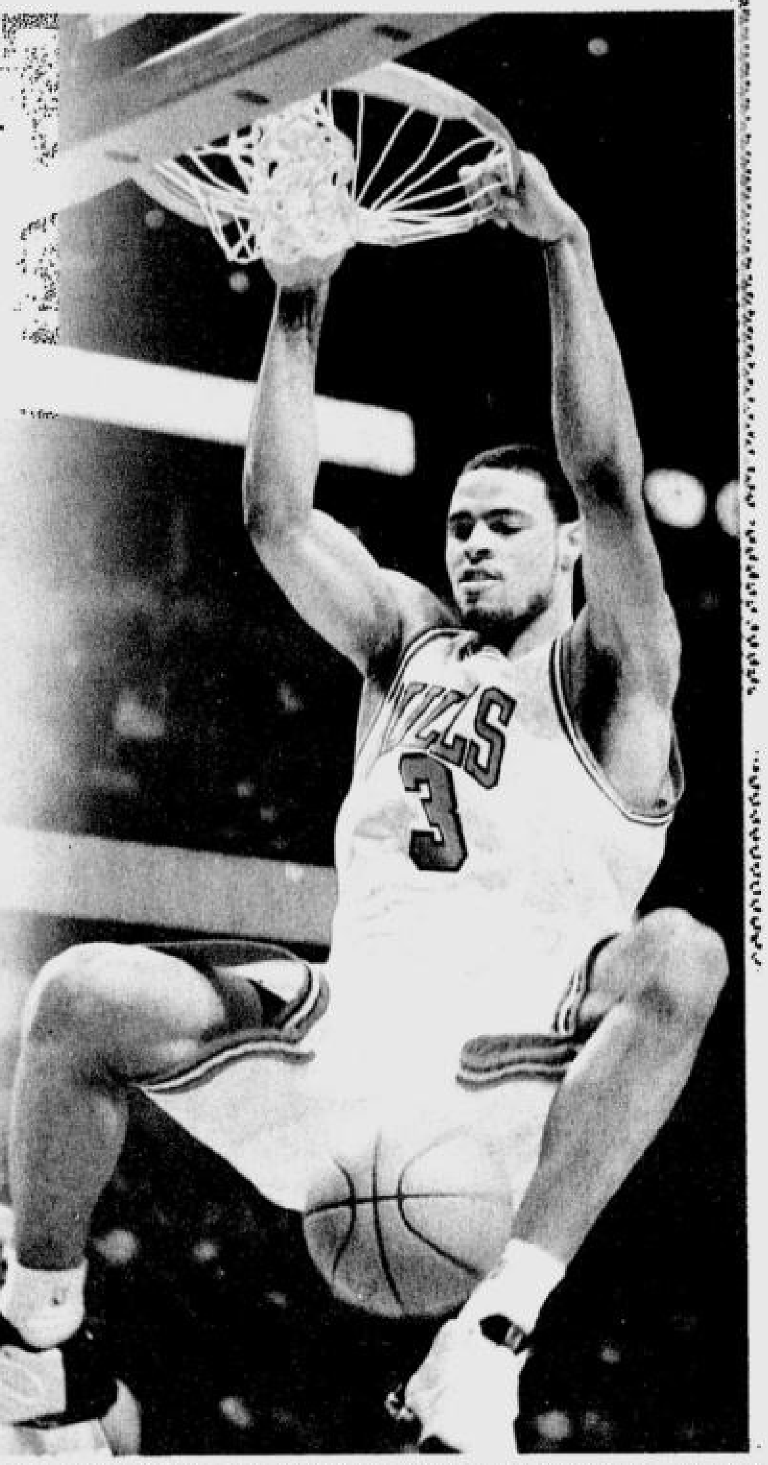
Gordon spent the entire second half on the bench, and Okafor was held to four points.

Spurs 90, Kings 80

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 25 points and Tim Duncan added 20 for San Antonio, which fended off a late rally from Sacramento.

Sacramento, which lost to San Antonio by 30 points at home Sunday, made it more of a contest despite playing without Peja Stojakovic, who sat out with back spasms.

The Kings cut San Antonio's lead to 78-77 when Chris Webber stole the ball and passed to Brad Miller for a layup with 5:06 left. The Spurs then went on an 8-0 run as Robert Horry made three free throws, Bruce Bowen hit a 3-pointer and Duncan worked inside for a layup. *AP*



BULLS forward Tyson Chandler scores on an emphatic dunk. REUTERS

ort toasts partner

of leukemia. So for us to stand here today is pretty remarkable. We're extremely proud to be the runners-up."

The Americans won the women's doubles title at Wimbledon in 1999 and Morariu teamed with South African Ellis Ferreira to win the mixed doubles at the Australian Open in 2001.

But in May of the same year, Morariu was diagnosed with promyelocytic leukemia. After chemotherapy treatment, she made her comeback at a WTA event, playing doubles in San Diego in August 2002.

She reached her first final in three years at Philadelphia in 2004 with partner Liezel Huber of South Africa.

An emotional Morariu thanked her family, friends and Davenport for their support through her recovery period.

"It was a really special day," she said. "It's been a long three and a half years.

"The last time I got out of the hospital in November 2001, I couldn't walk 20 yards. So to think that I would be able to play tennis again, let alone play at this level, seemed like a really tall mountain to climb.

"But I just put my head down and started walking for five minutes, then running, then hitting for five minutes, just worked my way back from there."

Morariu said she still retained her competitive spirit.

"A couple of weeks ago I had a sort of enlightenment and realized that it still bothers me to lose and I still get frustrated," she said. *Reuters*

KARL WWW.THE-HSC.COM

Karl makes coaching return with Nuggets

DENVER—George Karl was hired as head coach of the Denver Nuggets on Thursday, returning to the NBA after nearly two years out to take over a team that has failed to live up to lofty expectations.

Karl is expected to be on the bench for Friday's game against the Milwaukee Bucks, the team that fired him in 2003. Michael Cooper, the interim coach since Jeff Bzdelik was fired on Dec. 28, will stay on as an assistant.

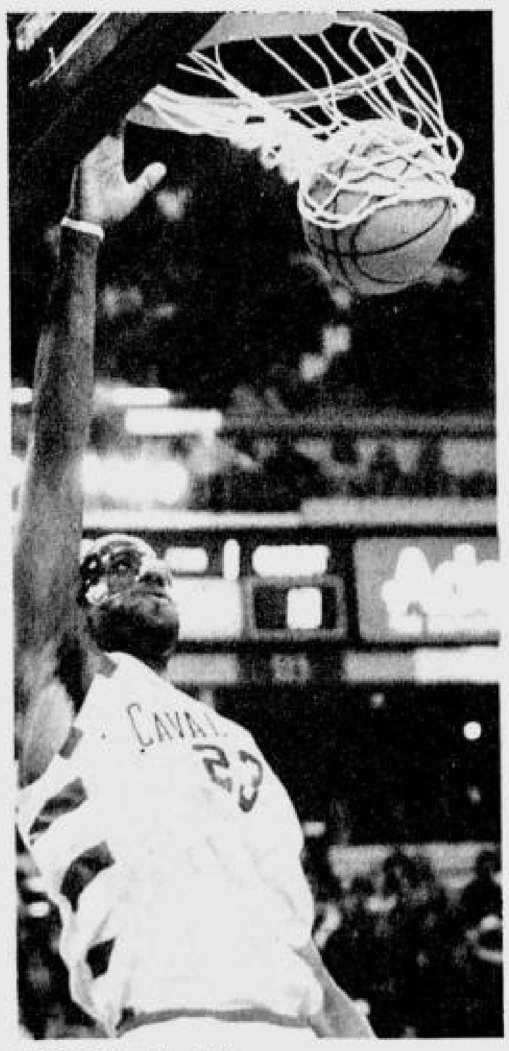
"We are very excited to be adding a coach of George's stature to our organization," Denver general manager Kiki Vandeweghe said in a statement. "He has won everywhere he has been and his track record speaks for itself. We also want to commend Michael for the job he did under difficult circumstances."

Karl has won 708 games in 16 NBA seasons—13th in league history—and helped Seattle reach the playoffs in 1991-92 after a 20-20 start. Karl also took the SuperSonics to the NBA Finals in 1996 and led them to at least 60 wins three times in five years. His coaching career includes stops in Golden State, Cleveland, and Spain.

Denver started the season as a favorite in the Western Conference after adding All-Star power forward Kenyon Martin to a team that was coming off its first playoff appearance in nine years.

The Nuggets still haven't lived up to that potential, entering Friday's game with a 17-25 record, and 12 1/2 games out of first place in the Northwest Division.

Karl has a reputation for clashing with some of his players, but an in-your-face style might be what the underachieving Nuggets need to break out of their doldrums. *AP*



JAMES: Double duty

James staring at busy NBA All-Star schedule

NEW YORK—LeBron James, the National Basketball Association 2004 Rookie of the Year, could have a busy All-Star weekend next month after being named here Thursday to the NBA Rookie Challenge's Sophomore squad.

James, who has sparked the Cleveland Cavaliers to the top of the Central Division, leads fan balloting for all guards in the Eastern Conference for the NBA All-Star Game on Feb. 20 at Denver.

The Rookie Challenge is two days earlier, featuring a lineup of second-year NBA stars against top newcomers. Dwight Howard, Emeka Okafor and Ben Gordon—the top three picks in last June's NBA Draft—were named to the Rookie lineup.

Past rookie stars such as China's Yao Ming of Houston and Tim Duncan of San Antonio have been excused from the rookie game when named to the All-Star Game.

But James signing on for the Sophomore squad signals the 20-year-old playmaker's willingness for double duty—a strong possibility since he is averaging 25 points, 7.4 rebounds and 7.6 assists a game so far this season.

Another member of the Sophomore squad who might be named to the All-Star lineup is Miami guard Dwayne Wade, the backcourt teammate of star center Shaquille O'Neal on the Eastern Conference-leading Miami Heat.

Wade trails James and NBA scoring leader Allen Iverson of Philadelphia in fan balloting but figures to be named as an All-Star reserve. Wade is averaging 23.2 points, 5.2 rebounds and 7.6 assists a game.

James played for the Rookies last year in Los Angeles, when the Sophomores romped 142-118 to seize a 3-2 edge in the rivalry.

James will have fellow Athens Olympian and Denver Nuggets forward Carmelo Anthony with him on the Sophomore squad along with Wade, forwards Chris Bosh of Toronto, Udonis Haslem of Miami, Josh Howard of Dallas and Kyle Korver of Philadelphia and guards Kirk Hinrich of Chicago and Luke Ridnour of Seattle.

Among the rookies, Olympian Okafor of the Charlotte Bobcats averages 15.4 points and 11.3 rebounds a game. Orlando's Howard, 19, averages 10.2 points and 9.8 rebounds while Chicago's Gordon averages 13.1 points a game.

The Rookies roster also includes guards Tony Allen of Boston, Devin Harris of Dallas and Beno Udrih of San Antonio and forwards Luol Deng of Chicago, Andre Iguodala of Philadelphia and Josh Smith of Atlanta. *AFP*

SAGUPAAN
50 COMPLEXOR 3000 SUPER TRIOS RAFFLE PROMO
FIRST DRAW WINNERS
5 LUZON WINNERS
MARION M. PALAIG, SR. Natividad, Pangasinan
DEXTER C. UMALI Piarkdel, Lipa City, Batangas
RENATO CAMAISA JR. Imus, Cavite
RICARDO ALMANZA San Pedro, Laguna
MARIO DOLOR Mabini, Batangas
5 METRO MANILA WINNERS
JAYSON SACRAMENTO Zapote, Las Piñas City
ALONZO A. BRABANTE Santolan, Pasig City
ARSENIO MARCELO Maypajo, Kalookan City
SHELLY JOICE B. OBEDO Katihan St., Muntinlupa City
JOEL G. BORROMEO UPS 5, Paranaque City
5 VISAYAS-MINDANAO WINNERS
JERRY CACERES Havas Aklan
JUN MADLANGBAYAN Sibalom, Antique
ISMAEL SANCHEZ, JR. Cebu City
LEA MANUELA LOPEZ Dumaguete City
GEORGE A. SEÑIRES Digos City, Davao del Sur
MAS MARAMING ENTRIES MAS MARAMING PAGKAKATAONG MANALO!
2ND MONTHLY DRAW FEBRUARY 14, 2005
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES IS ON JAN. 31, 2005
PROMO PERIOD: DEC. 1, 2004 to FEB. 28, 2005
Per DTI-BCR Permit No. [illegible] series of 2004

INQBOX

Question of the Week

Do you approve of MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's "wet rag scheme" to minimize jaywalking in the Metro streets? Why or why not?

Senders of d first 10 texts publishd in Tuesday's **INQBOX** *wiL each receiv an "Inquirer Mug! Ü*

Win this "Inquirer mug

Key in: inquirer news name/city/message.
Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)

*Metro Manila winners can call Jane at 8978808.
Provincial winners can text:
inquirer ad name/city/mailing address
to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them

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Caddies tilt adapts stringent format

THE NATIONAL Caddies' Open will use a very stringent format to assure that only the best and the brightest make it to the final round scheduled Friday next week at Wack Wack's East layout.

Each day of the 72-hole event presented by Pagcor will have a cut, with the first round at Calatagan eliminating players who fail to break 85 at the rolling par-70 course designed by Robert Trent Jones.

The normal 36-hole cut will allow only the best 50 percent of scores and ties to advance to the third 18 holes of the event backed by the First Gentleman Sports Foundation, San Miguel Corp. and the Philippine Sports Commission.

From there, only the low 20 scores and ties will advance to the final round at Wack Wack, site of many Philippine Open championships and the club where tournament co-chair Ben Abalos used to caddy and where he is now president.

Canlubang, another Jones creation, will be the venue of the third round.

More than 100 players have entered, some of them coming from as far as Iligan and the fabled Apo Golf in Davao, with the Edwin Andrews Air Force in Zamboanga sending the leanest contingent of two scratch players.

Participants who wish to ride the tournament shuttle are requested to be at the Villamor Golf Club parking lot by 5 a.m. on Monday for the official practice round. The buses leave at 5:30 a.m. for Calatagan.

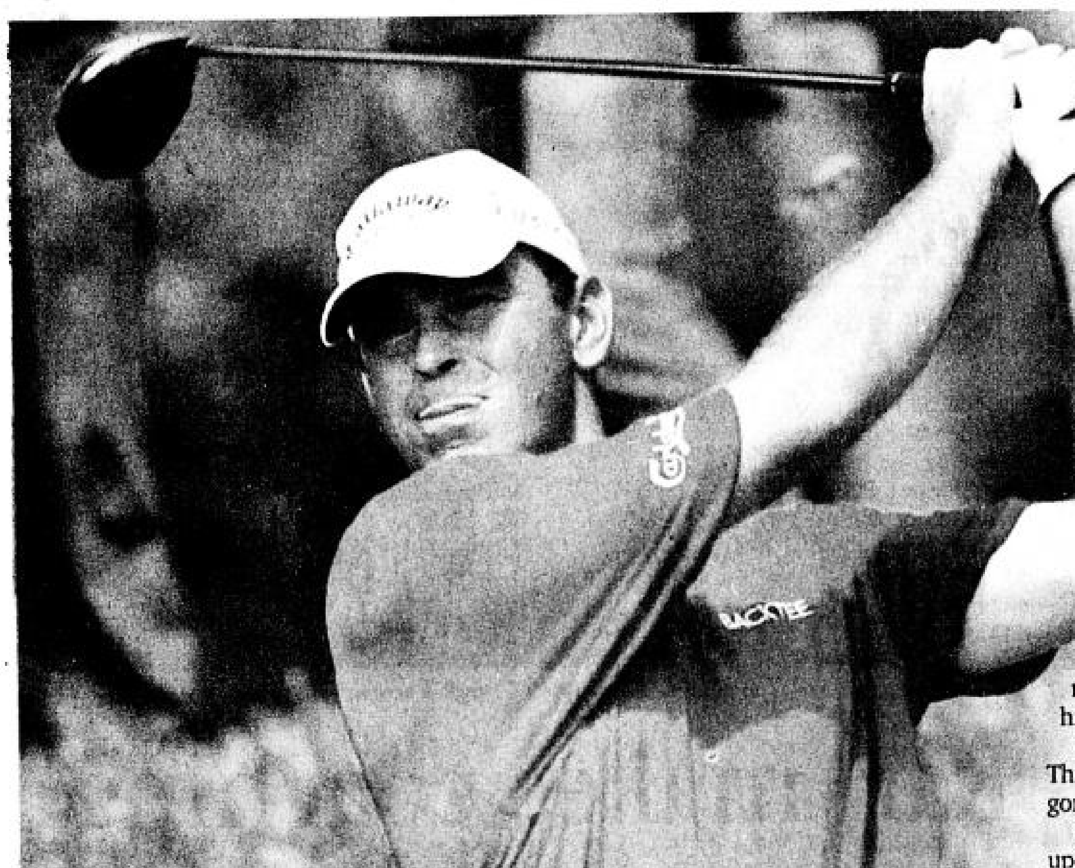
Rufino Bayron, younger brother of former caddies champion Jay, is entered along with three others from Canlubang.

Apo Golf sent seven entries, six of them carrying zero handicaps. Valley Golf is fielding in the largest contingent with 10, while Lanang, has five entries.

Wack Wack has signed up five players, while Calatagan will be represented by six.

Familiar surnames in golf like Cabajar, Magada, Piloto, Casas, Bayron, Santia, Ababa and Abalos are in the field.

Que shoots another 70, remains 5 strokes adrift


THOMAS Bjorn of Denmark follows his drive on No. 8 of the Laguna National in Singapore. AFP

SINGAPORE—Angelo Que of the Philippines recovered well from another double-bogey misadventure to shoot a two-under-par 70 for the second straight day and stay within striking distance of the leaders halfway through the Caltex Masters Singapore at the Laguna National Golf Club course here.

Que, the Vietnam Open champion, picked up three birdies on his last 12 holes, parring the last seven, to grab a share of ninth place with four others at four-under 140, five behind new frontrunner Nick Dougherty of Britain.

Dougherty shot five birdies and an eagle for a stunning 30 in the front nine in a five-under-par 67 effort that boosted him past overnight leader Colin Montgomerie.

Dougherty, still unshakeable after a 68 on Thursday, held a one-stroke lead over Montgomerie, who managed a 71 for 136.

Denmark's Thomas Bjorn fired a 66 to move up to a share of third with Lian Wenchong of China (68), Jamie Donaldson of Wales (68) and Danny Chia of Malaysia (70).

Que also lapsed into a double bogey-bogey start on Thursday but still broke par.

On Friday, he birdied the second and fifth holes only to throw them away with a double bogey-6 on No. 6. He picked up two more shots in the next two holes to hit the turn at 34, but bogeyed the 10th. He canned his fifth and last birdie on the 11th.

Rick Gibson, the Canadian who now resides in Manila, scored a 70 and was tied at 22nd with a 142 total.

Among those who missed the cut were early favorite Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand (74) and former Philippine Open champions Anthony Kang and Edward Michaels, both of the United States.

2 Mitsubishi cars staked for aces

TWO Mitsubishi Lancer GLX cars and a pair of Sony Home Theater Systems will be staked as hole-in-one prizes when the 27th Jose Yulo Memorial golf tournament gets going beginning today at the north and south courses of the Canlubang golf complex in Laguna.

The Mitsubishi cars, courtesy of Mitsubishi Motors, Phils., will be given to the first two players to score an ace on Nos. 6 and No. 8 of the north and south courses, respectively, while the Sony system will be up for grabs on No. 4 of the north and No. 13 of the south.

A Konka CTV 21" (No. 11-north), a TCL CTV 34" (No. 4-south), a Club Car golf cart (No. 15-north) and a Carrier Air Conditioner (No. 17-south) are the other prizes for aces staked in the two-day event held in honor of the late Speaker Jose Yulo.

A total of 125 teams will vie for top honors in various divisions of this member-guest team event with club member Joaquin Tan and guest partner Manuel Tinio, last year's champions, heading the big field that also includes the fancied Cangolf teams in interclub tournaments, led by the country's top amateur Juvic Pagunsan, reigning national champion Jun Bernis, Jay Bayron, Boyet Saragoza and Abe Rosal.

Cangolf president Tony Boy Cojuangco and partner Raul de Mesa, Cangolf chair lawyer Arsenio Yulo and teammate Silvestre Bello, Cangolf executive director and manager Luigi Yulo and partner Tabhan are also in the fold, along with Bing Bunye and Boy Bunye, Roberto de Ocampo and Lito Castrillo, Bambi Rivilla and Darly Patalot and golf manager Rolly Viray and partner Hanson So, Jr.

Organizers of the event, sponsored by Casa Kyla Inc. Century Park Sheraton, Citibank, Dream Satellite, Frescano, Miramar Fish Company and Pacsports, said that aside from the net and gross honors, prizes will also be given to the top three scorers on each course for two days of play.

Other backers of the tournament are Pan West Sports Inc., Pro-line Sports Center, Sarabia Optical, Schering Plough, Seamecor, Virgin Coconut Oil and Wine Direct.

Fabulous prizes will also be raffled off during the awards rites with Cangolf executive chef Anton Abad to prepare a sumptuous Spanish meal.

Under the rules, a member will have a maximum handicap of 26 for male and 32 for female while the guest participant will have a maximum handicap of 18 for male and 24 for female.

The aggregate scoring will be used with the combined points of both members of the team to count on the following basis: double-bogey 0, bogey 1, par 2, birdie 3, eagle 4 and double eagle or hole-in-one 5 points.

SPORTSWATCH

TRS holds karting clinic

THE TUASON Racing School (TRS) will hold a Karting Clinic at the Manila Speedzone at the Fort Bonifacio Global City today from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The clinic, which is sponsored by TRS, Philippine International Karting Association, Manila Speedzone and Smart Kid, is open to anyone aged seven and above. The entry fees are P1,500 for those aged 7 to 16 and P3,500 for 17 and above. TRS director and Philippine International Karting Association (PIKA) president JP Tuason will conduct the clinic. For details, visit the TRS at 41 Pioneer Street corner Edsa, Mandaluyong City or call 635-2587 and 747-2378.

Domanais lives up to No. 1 billing

JOSEPH Domanais lived up to his No. 1 billing by ruling the opening leg of the Metro Manila Darts Circuit 2005 recently at the Daungan Restaurant on Madre Ignacia St. in Quezon City. Domanais outlasted reigning Philippine Cup singles champion and No. 5 seed Joel Hizon, 5-4, in the best-of-nine legs finals to clinch the singles crown. He shared the spotlight with veteran Richard Callejo and up-and-coming Eric Bautista, who beat the pair of Warren Perolino and Shane Galang in the accompanying doubles championship. Domanais and the pair of Callejo-Bautista won cash prizes put up by the National Darts Council of the Philippines and sponsors Terton Craft and Daungan Restaurant. Benny Alvarez and Orlan Bernardino landed joint third in the singles.

NBN-4 airs PSA Awards

NBN-4 airs tonight the PSA Annual Awards Night held at the Manila Pavilion recently. The program will be televised starting at 9 p.m. The Jan. 13 affair had golf star Jennifer Rosales and boxing idol Manny Pacquiao honored as the Sportswoman and Sportsman of the Year awardees, respectively, by the country's oldest media organization. Top Filipino athletes and sports officials led by Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) President Jose Cojuangco, graced the 90-minute rite hosted by amateur cage star Alex Compton and broadcaster Lala Roque. Former President Fidel Ramos and First Lady Amelita Ramos were among the special guests along with 2002 Asian Games gold medalist Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski. Sultry singer Kyla was the guest performer.

Nueva Ecija IX retains title

TALAVERA, Nueva Ecija—Nueva Ecija scored seven big runs in the bottom of the fourth inning to beat Tanauan City, 10-5, yesterday and retain its crown in the 3rd All High School National Baseball championships at the Talavera National High School ground here. The host team opened the game with a 1-run lead as pitcher Marvin Malig hit an RBI (runs batted in) single-scoring Keneth Sinuto, who went to first base on an error, the first run of the game. Tanauan managed to tie the game and scored the go-ahead run in the second inning with Ronnel Landicho through a fielder's choice and Emmanuel Redondo on Jay-R Gomez's RBI single. Both teams went blank in the next two innings until Nueva Ecija exploded in the fourth inning. "I am happy that the tournament ended with no untoward incident," said Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson. "I congratulate team Nueva Ecija for retaining the title."

Pamigay Premyo slates 109 fights

A TOTAL of 109 non-stop fights are lined up beginning at 5 p.m. today as the championship round of the P1 million Pamigay Premyo 5-Cock Derby gets underway at the fully air conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum. Sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. This derby series being hosted by former Mayor Nene Aguilar has attracted 194 entries. Seeing action in the 3-cock finals are 40 cockers who tallied two wins each plus 24 new participants who will field straight five cocks. Among those with two victories are Abring Bautista (Bauer and J and R), Eldie Soriano (j-15 LD Ridge), Dennis Aguilar (Nini), Jericho Rosario (Edong and Gerry Cica), Ramil Medina (Taga-Silang I), Muling Dorado (Anak ng Panday), Jericho Louie (M38 Cica), Alex Tobias (Feb. 26 LPC and First of May), Eric Shio (Magdalena), Federico Agco (Big Boy), Pepe Burgos (March 30 LPC 3-Cock) and Art Perez (RZB 2M 5-Cock Surigao).

NCA presents 7-cock derby

AFTER the successful 2005 World Slasher Cup, the premiere National Cockers Association (NCA) presents another exciting 7-cock derby this coming Tuesday and Thursday (Feb. 1 and 3) at the fully air-conditioned Araneta Coliseum. To be hosted by NCA 2004 Cocker of the Year winners Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo, the event will be participated in by some 40 big time cockers and breeders. Joseph Wolcott, the American partner of current World Slasher Cup champion Jun Santiago, decided to stay awhile in the country to field his remaining ace roosters on Tuesday. Roger Roberts of Thunderbird Firefly Hatchet is also fielding an entry. "The World Slasher fever is still on at the Araneta Coliseum," said NCA president Ito Ynares. Participants are reminded to submit entries on Monday, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Araneta green gate, and may contact 911-2928 or 911-3101 for details. Meanwhile, also slated is the NCA 7-Cock Derby on Feb. 8 and 10.

Annual Candelaria cockfest today

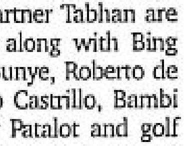
THE PRESTIGIOUS 38th Annual Candelaria 7-Cock Derby opens today at Jaro, Iloilo, in celebration of the Feast of the Nuestra Señora de Candelaria-Jaro's patron saint. Colliding head-on tomorrow and on Sunday are the first set of entries fighting four roosters each, while the remaining entries lock horns on Monday, the 31st and on Feb. 1. The 3-cock championship is set on Feb. 2. With a P6-million guaranteed cash prize, the 5-day event is again hosted by respected cocker & derby promoter Chito Tinsay and sponsored by Thunderbird Multi-Grains Concentrate/ Conditioner and Thunderbird Bexan XP. Among the top favorites are new World Slasher champ Boy Marzo, Sonny Lagon of Blue Blade Farm, Otic Geroso, Lance dela Torre, Ricoy Palmares Jr., Jezry Palmares, Kenneth Chua, Elmer Codilla, Eddie Boy Ledesma, Bobby Tan, Jesse Ledesma, Danding Cojuangco, Renato Lacson, Patrick Antonio, Sonny Lagon, Danilo Hinlo, Boy Go, Nene Abello and Raffy Yulo.

Anniversary event takes limelight

MORE than 100 matches await derby fans tonight at Roligon Mega Cockpit as the P4-Million Roligon 15th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby takes the limelight starting at 3 p.m. Hosted by Rolly Ligon and sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds & Lakpue Drug Inc., the six-day event stakes a guaranteed cash prize of P4 million pesos and a 3-door 2800 Pajero for an entry fee of P12,000 and minimum bet of P5,500.

Historic first

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

"I've heard what a great event the men's HSBC World Match Play is in England, so I'm really looking forward to ours."

--Annika Sorenstam.

ONLY a couple days ago, a momentous occasion hit world golf. Our ladies will now have their own Match Play, courtesy of HSBC.

Called the HSBC Women's World Match Play Championship, the inaugural staging of this breakthrough event will be held in Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Gladstone, New Jersey, from June 30 to July 3 this year.

HSBC, one of the world's largest financial services organizations, takes the singular distinction of being the only sponsor of an individual match play championship in women's golf. It has pledged a winner's check of $500,000, the highest in the history of the LPGA.

This is simply the best news in sports to come out so early in the year.

This has a special meaning to us because our very own Jennifer Rosales is qualified to join the tournament because she is in the Top 60 after the last LPGA season. In fact, Jennifer is now No. 10 in the world.

The championship will be the first official match play tournament to be played in America in half a century. Eligibility for the top class 64-woman field will be based on the leading 60 professionals on the ADT Official LPGA Money List (as of 20 June 2005), the U.S. Women's Open Champion, leader of the Japanese LPGA Money List (as of 13 June 2005), plus two special invitations by the sponsors. Players will compete in 18 holes of head-to-head match play golf culminating in a grand final on Sunday, July 3.

The five-year deal between HSBC, tournament organizers IMG and the LPGA includes a total annual prize fund from HSBC of US$2 million. The HSBC Women's World Match Play Championship, the only official match play tournament on the LPGA schedule, will be covered live in the US by CBS on July 2 and July 3 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. EST. The Golf Channel will broadcast the first two days' play. Internationally, the championship will be seen in major markets around the world with a cumulative reach of an estimated 100 million homes.

I can't wait to watch this historic occasion, much less cover it, especially with our Jennifer Rosales in competition. Gosh, this will be quite an experience, being there while a world inaugural in ladies golf is being played.

Said Stephen Green, Group Chief Executive of HSBC Holdings in the US: "The HSBC Women's World Match Play represents another significant investment in golf by HSBC. As the world's most international bank, it is fitting that we are involved in a sport with truly global appeal. Golf is well-established in developed markets and suits the tastes and lifestyles of many HSBC customers. And it is a booming and aspiration-rich sport in regions like Asia, where our Group was founded, and which remains crucial to our business. Golf among women is experiencing equally powerful growth, with nearly one and a half million new women players taking up the game in the US since the turn of the millennium. We are delighted to become part of this and we hope that by offering the highest winner's check in LPGA history, the HSBC Women's World Match Play proves an important milestone in the development of women's golf. The game very much mirrors HSBC's character and how we like to do business. Internationalism, inclusiveness and integrity are as much characteristics of the sport as they are of HSBC and we are proud of our association with the game."

Said Ty Votaw, the LPGA Commissioner: "The drama of match play, coupled with the participation of the world's top female golfers at a superb new tournament venue, is certain to create a thrilling event for fans in the Metropolitan New York area and around the globe. I'd like to thank IMG for conceiving the event and HSBC for lending their support to what I am confident will become one of the most exciting and popular tournaments on the LPGA schedule."

The Hamilton Farm is a private golf club situated on an elegant, historic country estate. Located on the historic 535-acre James Cox Brady estate west of Manhattan in Gladstone, New Jersey, Hamilton Farm offers two spectacular courses: the par-72 Highlands Course, measuring more than 7,000 yards; and the Hickory Course, an 18-hole par-3 challenge that is the only USGA-rated 'short course' in the United States. The highly respected team of Dr. Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry designed the two courses. Hamilton Farm is also home to the headquarters and Olympic training grounds for the United States Equestrian Team.

Here's to HSBC. Certainly, with HSBC's five-year sponsorship of the Women's World Match Play, it made a coup of sorts in the sporting world. Cheers!

FIGURE STAKING: Tatiana Navka and Roman Kostomarov perform in the Ice Dancing Original Dance at the European Figure Skating Championships in Turin on Jan. 27. AFP

Mayol stakes OPBF crown versus Indon

HARD-HITTING Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation minimumweight kingpin Rodel Mayol stakes his title tonight in a 12-round headliner of the "Against All Odds" card against Indonesian challeger Marty Polii at the Casino Filipino Amphitheater in Parañaque.

Mayol, WBC No. 2/WBA No. 5/WBO No. 4, will stake his unblemished record of 19 wins with 15 KOs in the second defense of the crown he took by knocking out Japanese Genki Ohnaka in 2003.

Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. will award the championship belt to the winner in this event sponsored by Family Rubbing Alcohol, Reli Travel and Tours, Pagcor, Casino Filipino and Atrium Hotel. Part of the proceeds will go to the training of national athletes for the Southeast Asian Games in November.

In yesterday's weigh-in supervised by GAB Boxing Division chief Emmanuel Flores, Mayol came in at 105 lb, while Polii weighed in at 104 lb.

"I am ready to defend my title. I have always kept myself busy in the gym, and is looking forward to a great performance tomorrow," said Mayol.

Newly appointed GAB chair Eric Buhain will grace the event with Commissioners Angel Bautista and Alex Paglumotan.

If successful, Mayol is hoping for a crack at WBC minimumweight champ Isaac Bustos of Mexico in his next fight. WBC president Jose Sulaiman had assured Mayol of a top ranking during the WBC Convention in Bali, Thailand, last year.

In the chief support, ex-RP flyweight champ Edgar Rodrigo takes on Thai Somyot Vor Surapol in an OPBF flyweight eliminator.

Salven Lagumbay, Contributor

WBO BANTAMWEIGHT

Bautista defends title vs Bebe tonight

Salven L. Lagumbay

MANDAUE CITY—All roads lead to this fight capital of Cebu as reigning World Boxing Organization Asia Pacific bantam king Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista defends his title for the first time against South African toughie Vuyisile Bebe at the Mandaue City Sports and Cultural Complex here.

The unbeaten 18-year-old Bautista, ranked No. 8 by the WBO, stakes his title, reputation and world ranking against a fighter who has never lost by knockout in his career.

"If I win this fight, his ranking will be mine. I am going to take the belt away from him," Bebe said moments after the official weigh-in yesterday supervised by WBO Asia Pacific chair Leon Panoncillo of Hawaii, USA, and GAB-7 officials.

Bautista (13-0, 9 KOs) came in at an exact 118 lb, while Bebe (13-5, 5 KOs) tipped the beam at 116.5 lb.

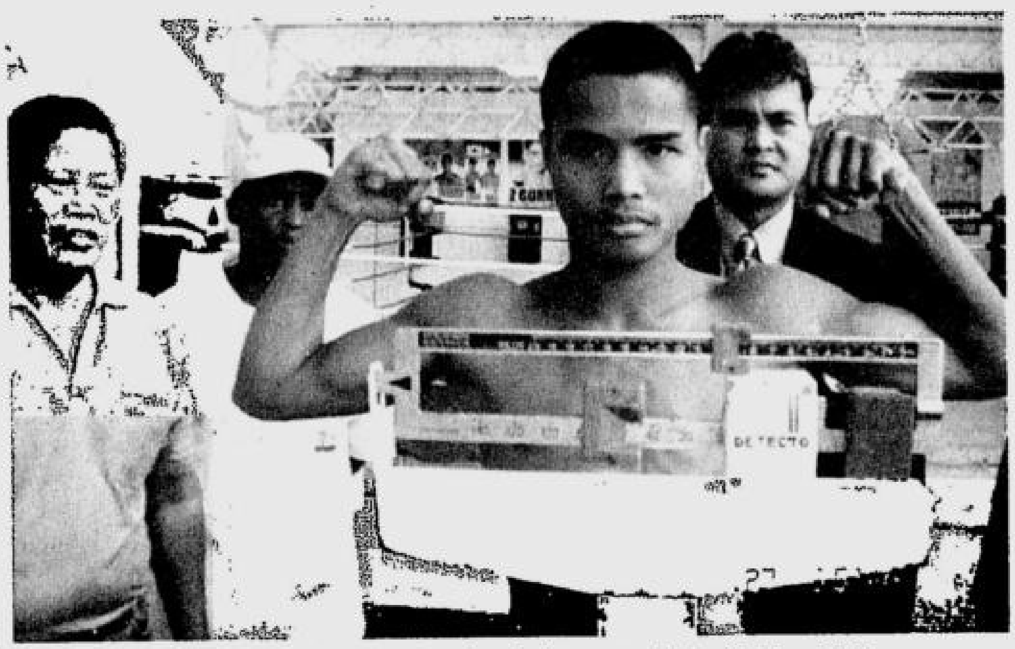
Bautista, a native of Candijay, Bohol, is expected to get additional morale booster tonight as boat loads of Bohol fans—led by Gov. Erico Aumentado, Tagbilaran City Mayor Dan Neri Lim, and Candijay Mayor Boboy Amora—will be arriving to be at ringside to cheer for their local hero.

"We are expecting a jampacked coliseum tomorrow. Fans should come earlier to get themselves seats," said promoter Sammy "Don King" Gelloani.

In the chief support, reigning RP welterweight king Dondon Sultan of SGG defends his title against Wakee Salud's Ramil Caballes in another 12-round humdinger.

Japanese Noriharu Iwatani goes up against Rex Marzan in eight rounds; Rocky Fuentes battles Eddie Villegas; Donnie Nietes takes on Ricardo Albia; Pedro Malco trades mitts with Jaime Acerda; and Robert Allanic swaps leathers with Eric Rapada.

In the curtain-raiser of this Fighter Wine-sponsored event, Jun Entor takes on Phil Angcamor.



WBO Asia Pacific bantam champ Rey Bautista during yesterday's official weigh-in.
SALVEN LAGUMBAY

MJCI owes gov't no taxes—Reyno

MANILA Jockey Club Inc. (MJCI) president Alfonso R. Reyno Jr. yesterday denied that MJCI owes the government amusement taxes.

In a letter to National Tax and Research Center executive Lina Isorena, Reyno explained that MJCI is not liable to pay amusement taxes because under its legislative franchise, Republic Act No. 8407, the payment of the franchise tax is in lieu of any and all taxes of any kind, nature and description levied or collected by any authority whether barangay, municipal, city, provincial or national.

Newspaper reports have earlier quoted Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Marañon III as saying that operators of racing clubs owe the government P8.4 billion in amusement taxes based on the computation of the NTRC.

While the 1997 Tax Code now subjects MJCI to the 10-percent value added tax instead of the 25-percent franchise tax, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has affirmed in Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 5-96 that the "in lieu of all taxes" provision in the MJCI franchise is not affected by the Expanded VAT Law. .

Reyes clarified that RA No. 8407 mandates the apportionment of the gross receipts of MJCI. Eighty-two percent goes to dividends of winning tickets; eight and a half percent is retained as commission; eight and a half percent is set aside for the payment of stakes or prizes of win, place and show horses and authorized bonus for jockeys; and one percent is set aside for the use of the Philippine Racing Commission.

St. Benilde gets shot at twin titles

COLLEGE of St. Benilde gets a shot at an outright twin championship of the NCAA Season 80 Football tournament today when its juniors face Philippine Christian University at 1 p.m. and seniors meet defending champion San Beda College at 3 p.m. at the Philippine Navy Football Field in Taguig.

First round champions in both divisions, CSB ties San Beda (2-0, seniors) and Philippine Christian (2-0, juniors).

With the Benildeans winning the first-round pennant last Saturday, a victory by the Bedans would make this the third straight year that the senior football championship is contested by the Blazers and back-to-back title holder Red Lions since the 2002-2003 season.

As in the 78th and 79th NCAA seasons, San Beda has the upper hand with National Men's Team coach Aris Dimaunahan at the helm and a deep bench composed of players who are currently lined up in the Tigers Cup and former National Youth Team members.

On the other hand, St. Benilde, mentored by National Women's Team coach Marlon Maro, enjoys a psychological edge, having won the classic down-the-wire encounter between the two contenders last Saturday via a shoot-out. CSB captain goalkeeper Johniel Vapor caught the first kick of SBC's Jeremias Jiao while all the Benildean kickers converted their penalty kicks.

Juniors darkhorse PCU took San Beda out of the juniors picture last Thursday in the golden goal extension period that settled the 1-1 draw of regulation; while La Salle Greenhills thrashed Colegio de San Juan de Letran, 9-0.

In the seniors' matches, St. Benilde trounced Jose Rizal University, 8-0; San Beda beat Mapua Institute of Technology, 3-0.

A double-victory by CSB today will formally end the short NCAA 80 football season that began on Jan. 8. CSB Sports Development head Bernardo Atienza gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Navy captain Primo Hinco and Commodore Uy in forging the hosting partnership with the Philippine Navy, which allowed the free use of its Fields 1 and 2.

Suzara wants to meet Tigresses in semis

By Musong R. Castillo

THE FLEDGLING Shakey's V-League can certainly use Tats Suzara, a man who is not afraid to speak his mind out and one who puts himself in the verge of trouble each time.

He's doing the league a great advertising and marketing favor.

While everyone in the field seems to be playing it safe, Suzara has gone on a wild talking binge, unmindful of the company he's in and his place in the standings.

First, he predicted that his Lady Legends would go all the way to the finals and win the whole thing.

That was prior to scrapping past a gritty Lyceum side in five sets Tuesday. After which, he told everyone that he wants what the entire field is trying to avoid in the semis—Santo Tomas.

"I want UST (in the semis)," Suzara said. "We'll beat them and then I'll see you all in the finals."

Suzara is talking that way even with only nine healthy women in his lineup, and those who are can easily pass as mothers to the collegiate players in the field.

"We have the experience and the skill, and those are vital ingredients in winning."

The Legends lost both their matches with the defending champion Tigresses in the eliminations in a combined 10 sets.

And those debacles actually give Suzara hope.

SUZARA

"We lost both games in five sets, and that speaks well of the talent I have in my team," Suzara explained. "Losing (in five sets) means not getting the breaks in the end."

The four losses in 11 games that the Legends have in the elims came from UST (two), Letran and La Salle.

The game against the Lady Archers is particularly bitter to recall, for the team lost attacker Teresa dela Rosa to an ACL tear during that match.

For Suzara to get to UST, his Legends must lose to La Salle on Sunday, making the Tigresses the No. 2 seed by virtue of an inferior quotient.

If at all, Suzara is still safe from ridicule even if he loses to La Salle, for he would get his wish of drawing the Tigresses.

If he then fails to make it to the finals, he'll have a lot of words to eat, and the league's best PR and promotion machine, which Suzara is at the moment, will be the league's biggest joke.

Tryouts for women billiard players set

THE SOUTHEAST Asian Games will include women's competition in billiards for the first time.

In this connection, Ernesto Fajardo, president of Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, announced a national women's billiard tryout to be held at Bowling Inn on Taft Avenue on Feb. 10-12 to pick the team that will represent the Philippines in the Manila SEAG in November.

Fajardo said those who want to participate in the tryout should register not later than Feb. 7 on the second floor of Sports Medicine Building, Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, Malate.

After the tryouts, an intensive training program will be conducted for the chosen athletes. A women's category for billiards is also in the lineup of events for the 2006 Asean Games.

Aristeo G. Puyat, president of Puyat Sports, has been asked by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, to assist the BSCP in the training of the national billiards team.

2004's motorsports heroes feted Feb. 9

THE COUNTRY'S motorsports fraternity fetes its top achievers of 2004 during the second annual Golden Wheel Awards slated Feb. 9 at the Manila Polo Club.

Heading the list of awardees in their respective fields are Glenn Aguilar (motocross), Jolet Jao (motorcycle roadbikes), Vip Isada and navigator Aries Ilagan (rallye), Alex Perez (rallycross), Nelson Pamintuan (drag racing), Daryl Flores (slalom), Timtom Gempesaw (4x4 off-road), Jody Coseteng (National Touring Car), Ivan Carapiet (Formula Toyota), Matteo Guidicelli (Shell karting), Michelle Bumgarner (Asian karting) and Tyson Sy (Formula 3).

From this eminent roster will come the 2005 Golden Wheel Motorsports Driver of the Year.

The Golden Wheel Awards was launched last year to pay tribute to the top motorsports achievers of the past year and to inspire them to bigger achievements in the international arena.

"Through the Golden Wheel Awards, we hope to inspire the country's top racers to make it big in the international racing scene," said Golden Wheels Awards chair Johnny Tan.

CALTEX
REVTEX

JERICK Mitra of Caltex Revtex-Oakley shows his plaque and cash prize.

Mitra newest toast of local motocross

JERICK Mitra of CALTEX Revtex-Oakley became the newest toast of local motocross after ruling the juniors division of the 2005 Namssa National Motocross Series at the Clark Eagles raceway in Pampanga recently.

The 8-year-old rider from Santa Ana, Manila withstood the challenge of his taller and older rivals to top the 65cc, 12 years old and below.

Mitra, who figured in a spill during the morning practice, was dominant throughout the actual race. He stunned his rivals in the morning heats before finishing them off in the afternoon race to take the top plum.

He was also impressive in the Pewee 50cc advanced class, finishing second and earning the right to represent the country in the prestigious 2005 FIM Asian Supercross Championship in Guam on Feb. 6.

"I am proud of my performance," said Mitra. "I really prepared hard for the race."

Mitra, who aims to capture this year's national juniors Rider of the Year honor, said he's hopeful of another good showing in Guam.

It was Mitra's second straight victory counting his triumph in the first leg of the motocross series in San Pablo, Laguna, two weeks ago.

Mitra tries to match the accomplishment of seven-time juniors Rider of the Year Kenneth San Andres, who now rides in the pro division in the FIM Asian Supercross together with another former kiddie sensation Glenn Aguilar.

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SATURDAY *Special*

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J-Lo, Usher heat up Cannes pop awards

CANNES—Jennifer Lopez and Usher recently lit up the stage in Cannes at the 2005 NRJ Music Awards, France's flashy answer to the Grammys.

The star-studded live broadcast, complete with a paparazzi-lined red carpet reminiscent of the Cannes film festival, was the kick-off event for the world's biggest and most influential music trade fair, MIDEM.

Among the winners, Maroon 5 took home two trophies for international breakout act and best international song for the catchy "This Love." The group is up for a Grammy for best new artist next month.

Artist of the year

Usher won for international male artist of the year, defeating rapper Eminem, rocker Lenny Kravitz and pop singers Robbie Williams and Billy Crawford.

Rocker Avril Lavigne was named best international female artist over pop princess Britney Spears and a trio of American R&B stars: Alicia Keys, Anastacia and Beyoncé.

USHER. Defeated Eminem, Lenny Kravitz, Robbie Williams and Billy Crawford.

But, performances by some of the biggest names in international pop music largely eclipsed the presentation of the awards. As for fashion statements, white was clearly the color of the night.

Lopez, sporting a sultry white tuxedo with black lapels, electrified the youthful crowd with the first live performance of her new single, "Get Right," from her upcoming album, "Rebirth," a dance anthem sure to be a club classic.

Usher, decked out from head to toe in white, swaggered through his monster hit, "Yeah!," eliciting screams from the women in the audience with his hip-thrusting dance moves.

Eight Grammys

The king of American R&B, nominated for eight Grammys, dominated the charts in 2004 with "Confessions," the year's top-selling album in the United States with nearly eight million copies sold.

Keys, a five-time Grammy winner nominated for eight statues this year, delivered a powerful rendition of "If I Ain't Got You." She followed the A-list dress code with a white trouser suit.

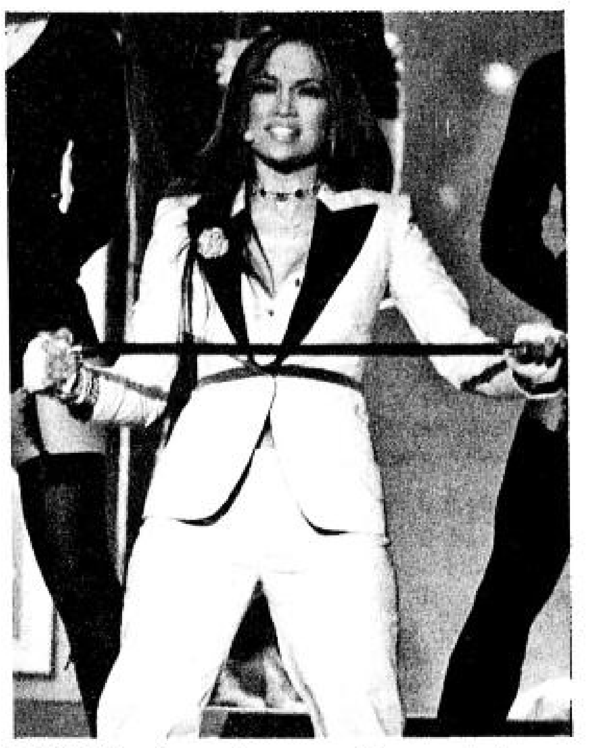
Other winners included US hip-hop group Black Eyed Peas, which took home top honors for best international album for "Elephunk."

British pop quartet Blue won for best international group or duo. French-Canadian pop star Roch Voisine took home the award for best Francophone male artist.

13 categories

NRJ is one of France's most popular radio stations, and more than five million listeners cast ballots in 13 categories: six French-language, six international, and the video of the year.

Irish rock band U2 received a special career achievement award. The group was originally scheduled to perform, but frontman Bono told reporters that one of the band's members was attending to a sick child. *AFP*



LOPEZ. First live performance of her new single, "Get Right."

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SM CITY FAIRVIEW

Ryan Cayabyab, the next 50 years

By Nestor U. Torre

(Conclusion)

TO think big, it takes a major talent who is prepared to work really hard to actualize his most challenging dreams. In the field of Philippine music, that's *maestro* Ryan Cayabyab, who this week completes his vision of the goals he has set for himself for the second half of what we hope and trust will be his "centennial" life:

"Despite all of the new production I've already outlined, I really believe that my life's work is definitively defined by my being, first, foremost and last, a teacher.

Major projects

"Working on major projects for the past 30 years has given me the experience and insight to better appreciate what the local music scene needs, and what we can do to provide it.

"Most importantly, we must give new talents the best possible training. By this I mean, not just training in skills and artistry, but also in principled work, so they will always strive to do their best, and for nobler reasons.

"This will help them get rid of the usual 'Ok *na yan*' attitude that makes so many local works mediocre. We also need to get over our miseducated preference for western styles.

"We need to go beyond the derivative notion that an orchestra should play mostly western classical music. Rather, we should use the musical medium to work out a different direction from what others are doing.

CAYABYAB. Wants to write a symphony for 2,000 cell phones!

"Look, the New York Philharmonic has been there for 100 years. Instead of trying to match its achievement in speeded-up fashion, let's surpass orchestras abroad in other ways, by cultivating and playing music they cannot.

Wider audience

"We should also confront the reality that symphony orchestras here can't be marketed to a wider audience, because they aren't playing the music of the people. And, realizing that, we can go on to figuring out what that music should be, so we *can* serve the people better.

"How to really reach them? You have to both win and wean them. Give them performances of higher quality, but little by little— don't alienate them with excessive 'seriousness' at the start.

"Yes, you're right, the effort should include television. *Should* we bring our "Musikahan" show back? It needs re-thinking. There are so many plans. For now, I can share that we're looking for a partner for a series of bimonthly TV musical specials.

"—Oh, before I forget, there's this other wild idea I have: To write and conduct a new symphony for the cell phone! I told you it was wild.

"It's also timely, and 'speaks' in the 'language' of our techno culture today. And, talk about reaching the people—*that's* their language now, the 20 million Filipinos who now own cell phones.

Interactive

"It'll be an interactive performance, making use of 2,000 cell phones whose sounds shall have been programmed in advance, joining a 'performance' that will involve many musical styles, from classical to Beatles, from *kundiman* to rock!

"OK, time to sum up my 'first' 50 years: It was a fun ride. My life and career thus far have had a recurring theme—things just happened, opportunities, ideas, they all just seemingly fell into my lap. I think that happens to some other people, too, but in my case, the difference was, I acted on them.

"Yes, I've been blessed, but instead of taking me on an ego trip, it's made me humble. Because I've been made to understand that all this wasn't my own doing. *Sa akin lang dumaan*.

"My next 50 years? More, much more of the same!"

Olivier award nominees announced

LONDON—"Mary Poppins" and "The Producers" led the nominations Thursday for this year's Laurence Olivier Awards, honoring achievement in London theater, opera, and dance during 2004.

"Mary Poppins" had nine nominations including best new musical, best actress in a musical for the show's star Laura Michelle Kelly and best actor in a musical for Gavin Lee, who plays Bert the chimneysweep in Sir Cameron Mackintosh's big-budget production.

The Mel Brooks comedy musical "The Producers," which was a smash-hit on Broadway and won 12 Tony Awards, received eight nominations. Co-stars Lee Evans and Nathan Lane—who is no longer in the show—are up for the best actor in a musical prize. Leigh Zimmerman, who plays Swedish secretary Ulla, is a nominee in the best actress category.

Huge hits

"Mary Poppins" and "The Producers" opened late last year in London and have proved huge hits with critics and audiences.

Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest West End production "The Woman In White," which has been less well received, had five Olivier nominations. They include best new musical and best supporting performance in a musical for Michael Crawford, who also starred in the original production of Webber's "Phantom of the Opera."

KELLY. Cited for her performance in "Mary Poppins."

LANE. Star of Mel Brooks' "The Producers."

The nominees for best new play were "The History Boys," which has been a hit for Britain's National Theater; "The Goat, Or Who Is Sylvia?"; "Festen"; and "By The Bog Of Cats," starring Holly Hunter.

The best actor category includes a nomination for newcomer Ben Whishaw, who won rave reviews for his lead role performance in "Hamlet" at the Old Vic. He is up against veterans Michael Gambon for "Endgame"; Richard Griffiths for "The History Boys"; and Jonathan Pryce for "The Goat, Or Who Is Sylvia?"

Best actress will go to Victoria Hamilton for "Suddenly Last Summer"; Clare Higgins for "Hecuba"; Anna Maxwell Martin for "His Dark Materials"; or Caroline O'Connor for "Bombshells."

Countess

Dame Judi Dench received her 13th Olivier nomination for best performance in a supporting role for her performance as the Countess of Rossillion in "All's Well That Ends Well."

The 29th Olivier Awards ceremony will be held on Feb. 20. *AP*

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Book version of Billy Crystal's '700 Sundays' due

NEW YORK—Billy Crystal is bringing his one-man show to bookstores.

"700 Sundays," based on the comedian's hit autobiographical one-man Broadway show about his family history, is scheduled for a November release by Warner Books.

CRYSTAL. His extraordinary talent connects with ordinary people.

Universal story

"Billy Crystal has always used his extraordinary talent to connect with ordinary people. In "700 Sundays," he has turned his family into a universal story that resonates with humor, memory, and love," Laurence J. Kirshbaum, CEO and chairman of the Time Warner Book Group, recently said in a statement.

The title "700 Sundays" comes from a calculation by Crystal that he and his father spent that many Sundays together before Jack Crystal died. Sunday was the one day of the week the two had to enjoy each other's company since Jack Crystal always held two or three jobs.

"Billy Crystal: 700 Sundays" features vivid portraits of other relatives, including his Uncle Milt, who founded Commodore Records and who, among other things, recorded Billie Holiday singing "Strange Fruit" when other record labels turned down the song about whites lynching a black man in the South.

Tickets are on sale for the show, one of Broadway's hottest tickets, through the end of March. *AP*

Oscar highlights and records recalled

By Nestor U. Torre

IT'S Academy Awards season again, with the 2004 trophies being handed out late next month. Even as film buffs look forward to the announcement of the latest batch of winners, they can recall some of the highlights and records set in past editions of Hollywood's annual cinematic love-fest:

The only silent film to win an Oscar as best picture: "Wings" (1927-28).

The first sound film to win for best picture: "The Broadway Melody" (1928-29).

The first movie in color to win a best picture Oscar: "Gone with the Wind" (1939).

The last entirely black and white movie to win a best picture award: "The Apartment" (1960).

Sequel

The only sequel to win an Oscar as best picture: "The Godfather, Part II" (1974).

The first non-Hollywood film to win an Academy Award: "The Private Life of Henry VIII (1932-33), which won a Best Actor Award for Charles Laughton.

The first non-Hollywood film to win a best picture award: "Hamlet" (1948), financed and filmed in England.

The first foreign-language performance to win an Academy Award: Sophia Loren, named 1961's best actress for her performance in the Italian film, "Two Women."

Films in which the entire cast was nominated for Oscars: "Sleuth" (1972) and "Give 'Em Hell, Harry" (1975).

Motion pictures that won awards for best picture, direction, actress, actor and screenplay: "It Happened One Night" (1934), "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (1975), and "The Silence of the Lambs" (1991).

HANKS (left) won consecutive best actor trophies in 1994 ("Philadelphia") and 1995 ("Forrest Gump").

MINNELLI (right) was the only winner with parents who both received Academy Awards.

Performers

Performers who won consecutive Academy Awards: Luise Rainer, 1936 and 1937; Spencer Tracy, 1937 and 1938; Katharine Hepburn, 1967 and 1968; Jason Robards, 1976 and 1977; Tom Hanks, 1993 and 1994.

Films that won three Academy Awards for acting: "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1951) and "Network" (1976). (No film has won all four of the Oscar awards for acting.)

The first posthumous Oscar winner: Sidney Howard, 1939 winner for writing the screenplay of "Gone with the Wind."

The first posthumous Oscar winner among performers: Peter Finch, 1976, for "Network."

Only year of a tie in the best actor category: 1931-32, Wallace Beery in "The Champ" tied with Fredric March in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

Only year of a tie in the best actress category: 1968, Katharine Hepburn in "The Lion in Winter" tied with Barbra Streisand in "Funny Girl."

Only year two Oscars were given for best director: 1961, Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, co-directors of "West Side Story."

Nominated twice

The only performer nominated twice for the same performance: Barry Fitzgerald, 1944, nominated both as best actor and best supporting actor for "Going My Way." (Such a feat is not possible under present Academy rules.)

The only performer to win two Oscars for the same performance: Harold Russell, 1946, voted best supporting actor for "The Best Year of Our Lives," and voted an Honorary Oscar that year for his performance.

The only Oscar winner with parents who both received Oscars: Liza Minnelli. Her mother Judy Garland received an Honorary Oscar in 1939. Her father Vincente Minnelli won as best actor in 1958. And Ms Minnelli herself won as best actress in 1972.

Faye Dunaway stars in reality TV show

LOS ANGELES—Faye Dunaway said she would have considered being on a reality TV show if they were around at the start of her career.

"The only thing I said 'no' to was the soap operas, because I thought I might get bad habits," Dunaway told reporters recently.

She's on a reality show at this stage of her career. Dunaway is the central figure in "Starlet," which debuts March 8 on the US WB network. She puts would-be actresses through a Hollywood boot camp that tests their mettle.

Management deal

The winner gets a management deal and a one-shot guest role on "One Tree Hill," the WB networks popular teen drama.

"What's not to like?," Dunaway asked. "You know, it gives them a chance."

Dunaway and actress Vivica A. Fox, who's also participating in the series, said they didn't have such immediate feedback on what they were doing right or wrong when their careers were beginning. *AP*

DUNAWAY. Central figure in "Starlet."

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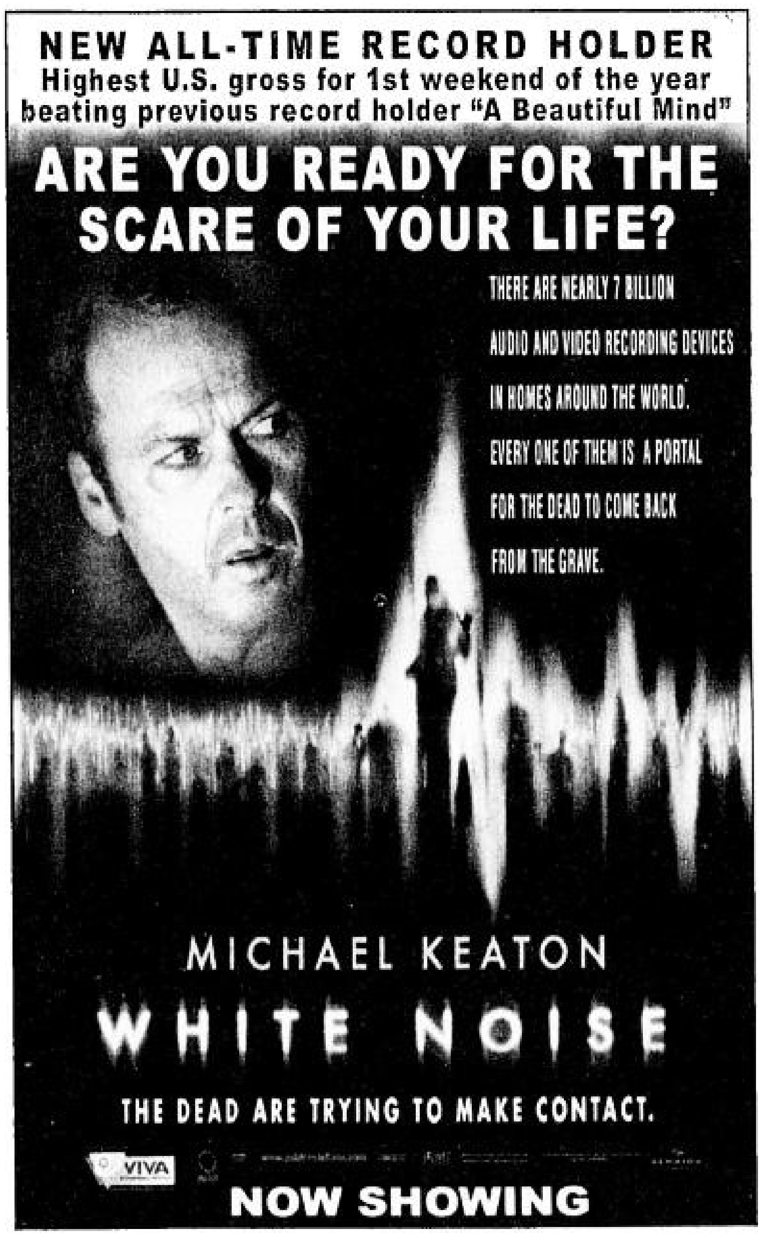

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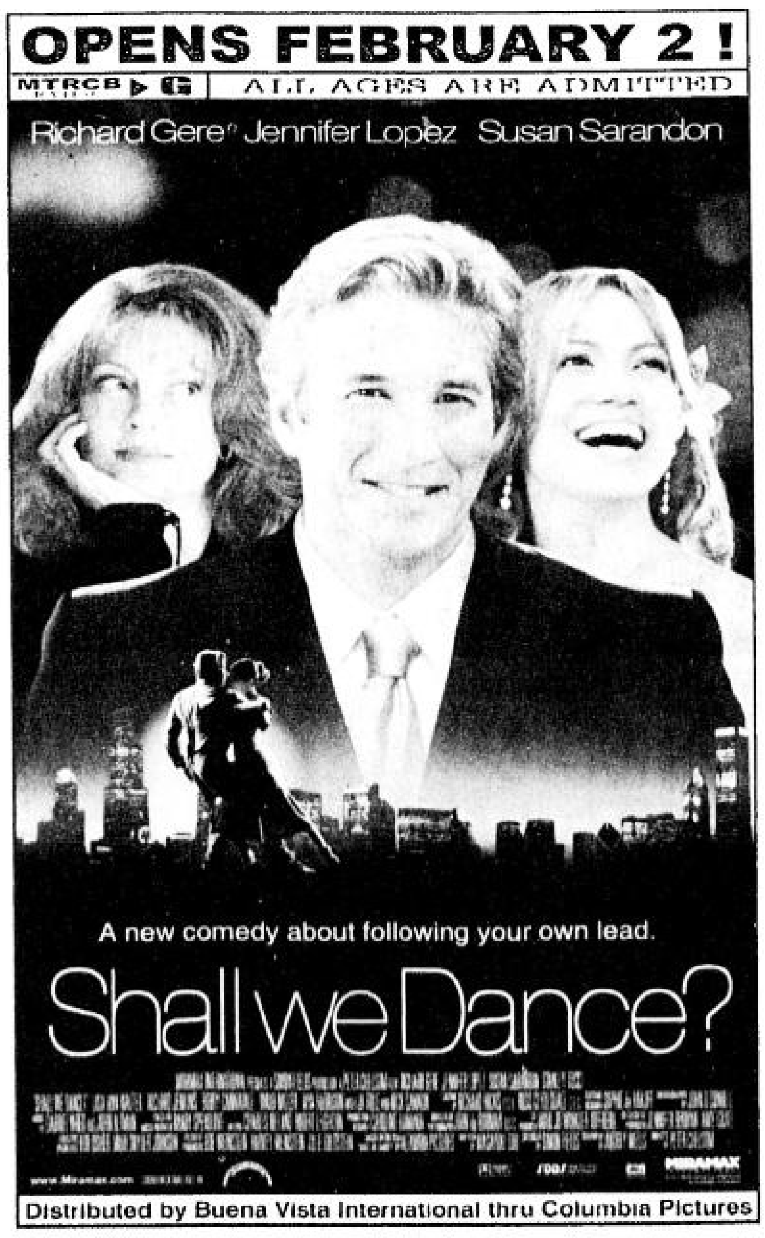

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Significant shift noted in 'American Idol'

HUNG. Bizarre and pathetic antics led to a hit album.

By Nestor U. Torre

LAST Jan. 19, the 2005 "American Idol" talent search started telecasting locally on ABC-5. The 2004 singing contest's success assures it of enthusiastic viewership this year, with viewers here hoping that more Fil-Am talents like Jasmine Trias and Camile Velasco will again figure strongly on the show.

As usual, the program has begun with highlights of its auditions in different parts of the United States. However, we note a significant shift in the show's coverage of those auditions: There seems to be a new emphasis on their "lowlights," instead.

Contestants

By "lowlights," we mean the bizarre and even pathetic antics of prospective contestants who not only aren't outstanding singers, but in fact are really awful non-performers who drive the search judges absolutely crazy.

We call this "the William Hung Effect," which we've named after the awkward Asian-American loser in last year's tilt who became a "winner" in his own right when he recorded a hit album.

Hung's antics must have been so perversely popular with viewers that the show has been trying to match them this year, with numerous snippets of ludicrous auditionees making unmusical fools of themselves.

In fact, the program's focus appears to have shifted so radically that we get only a few shots of outstanding auditionees, and are instead "regaled" with detailed coverage of truly horrible performances.

Too much importance

We suppose that this appeals to the bitchy side of viewers, but we don't like the shift because it's mean-spirited and gives non-talents too much importance. If this is a search for the best talents, let's focus on them, not on the losers!

However, the people behind the show obviously believe differently, so we'll probably be "entertained" with more losers' worst performances until the show goes on semi-finalist mode, hopefully as soon as possible.

As of last viewing, Sharon Galvez (formerly of Smokey Mountain) appears to have gotten that prized yellow card that is given to auditionees who have gotten the judges' nod, and will go to Los Angeles for the program's semi-finals.

We trust that more Fil-Ams will make the cut once the audition team gets to Hawaii, where more Jasmines and Camiles must be raring to strut their stuff for the search's snitty judges!

Kusturica to head Cannes jury

KUSTURICA. Two-time Palme D'Or winner.

PARIS—Director Emir Kusturica, a two-time winner of the Cannes' Film Festival's top honor, will return this year as president of the jury, organizers said recently.

The Sarajevo-born director, known for his whimsical, folkloric style, won the Palme d'Or for 1985's "When Father Was Away on Business" and 1995's "Underground."

Other directors

Only three other directors have won the honor twice: Shohei Imamura of Japan, Bille August of Denmark and Francis Ford Coppola of the United States.

The 58th Cannes Film Festival will take place from May 11 to 22. Last year, the Cannes jury headed by Quentin Tarantino awarded the top prize to Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11." *AP*

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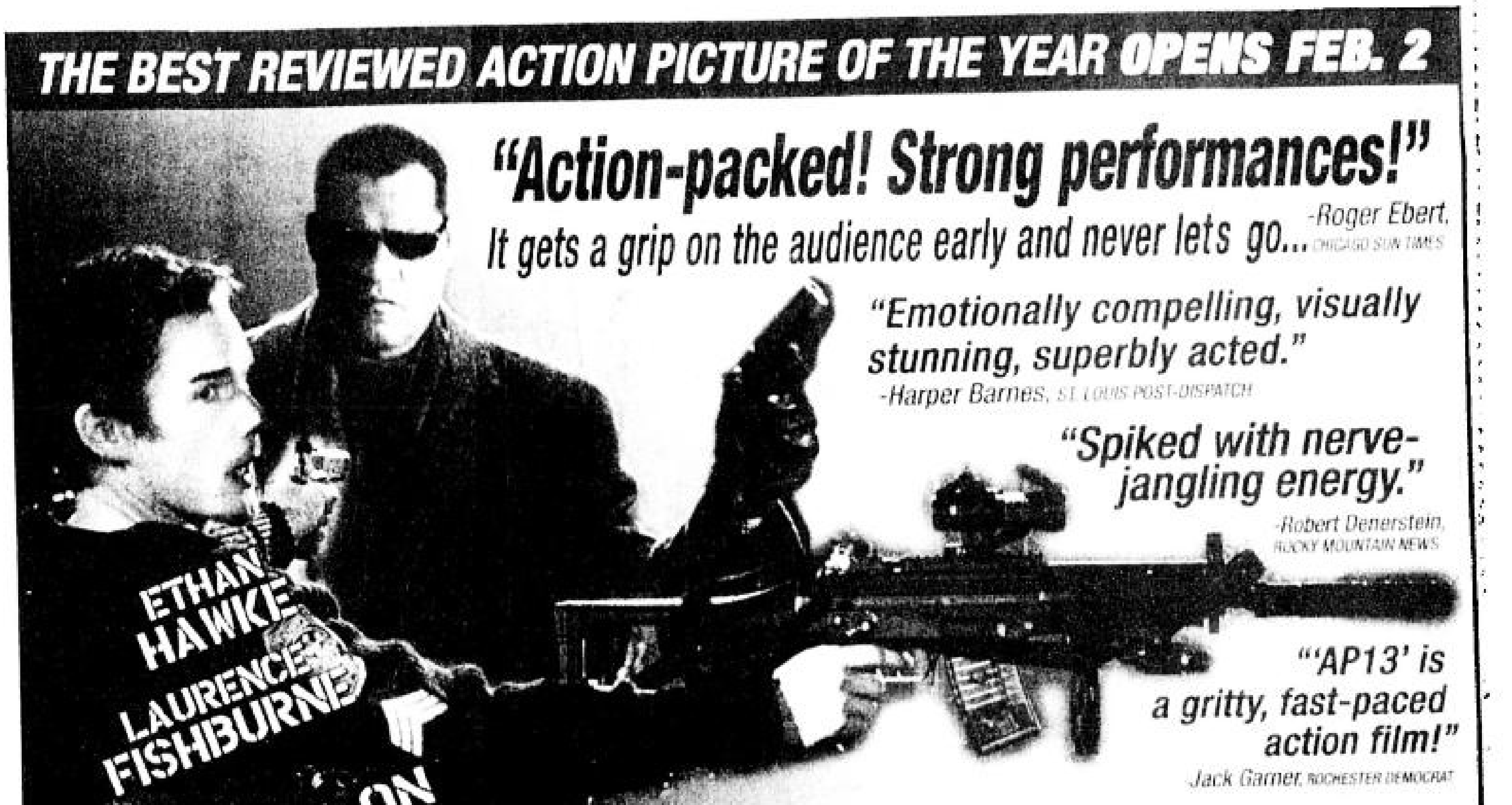

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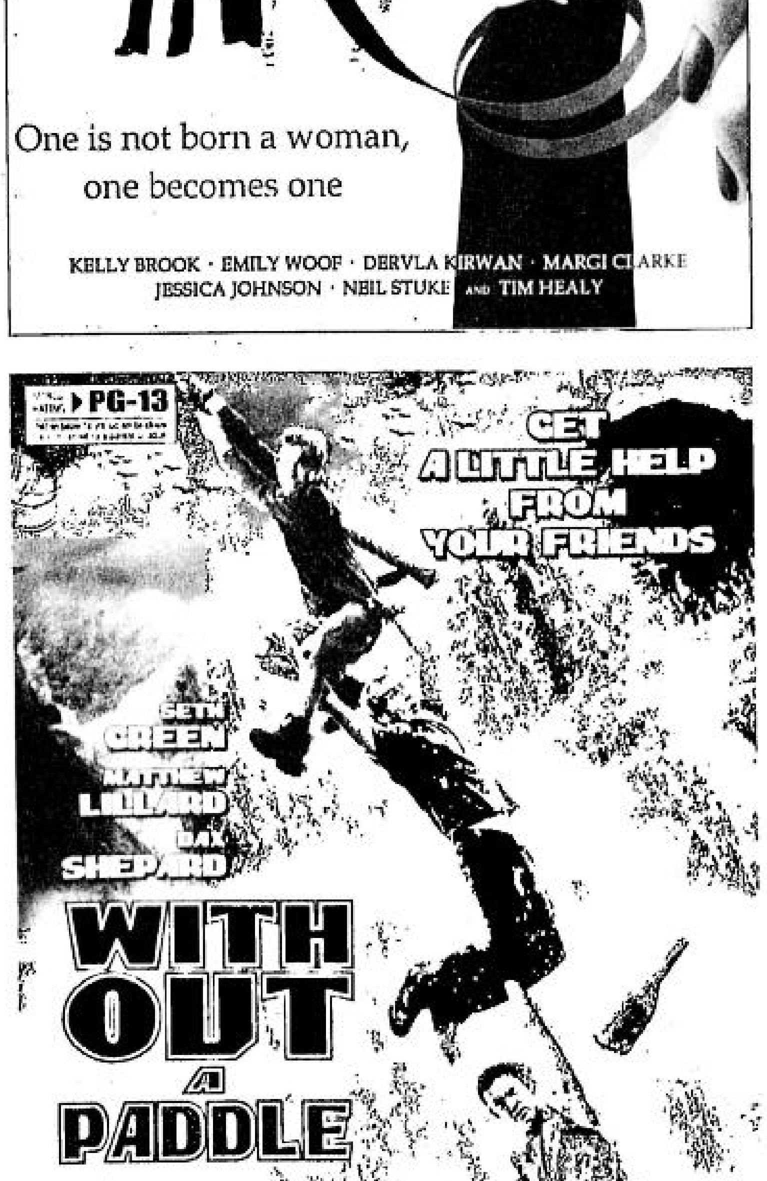

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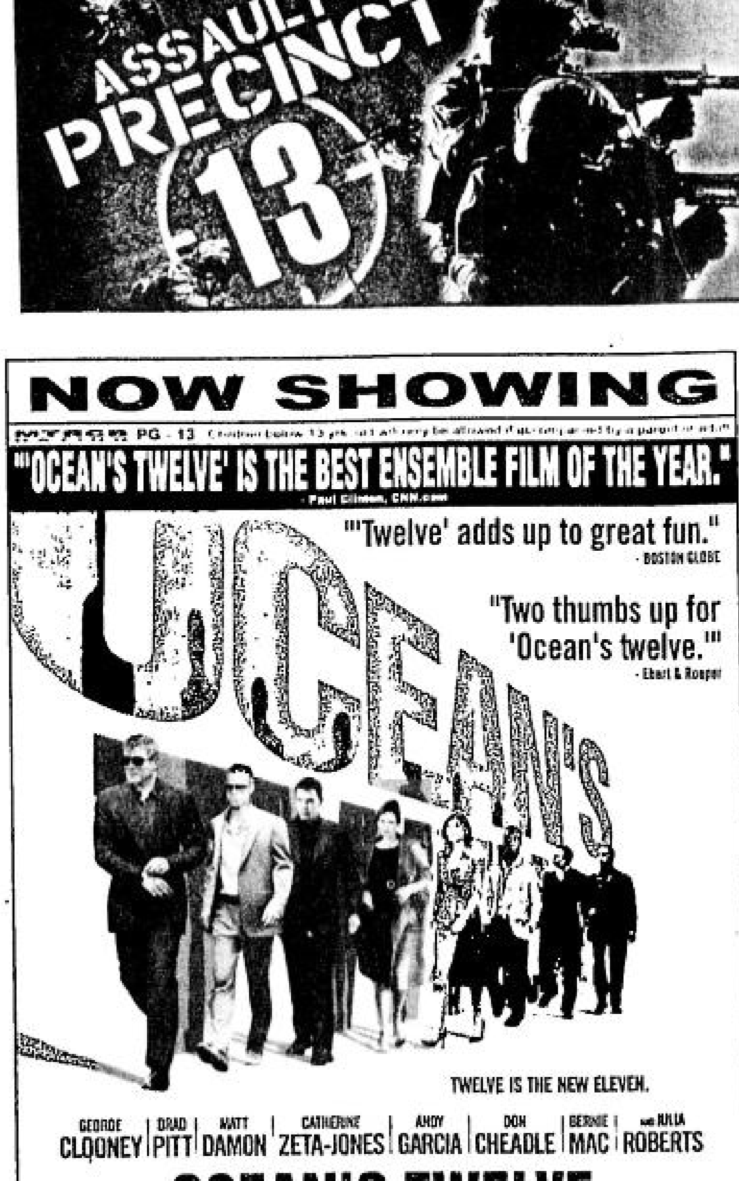

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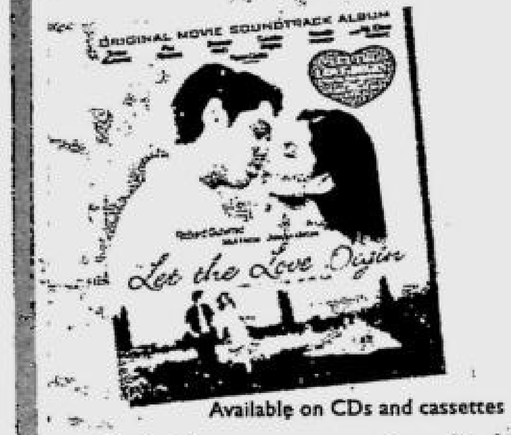

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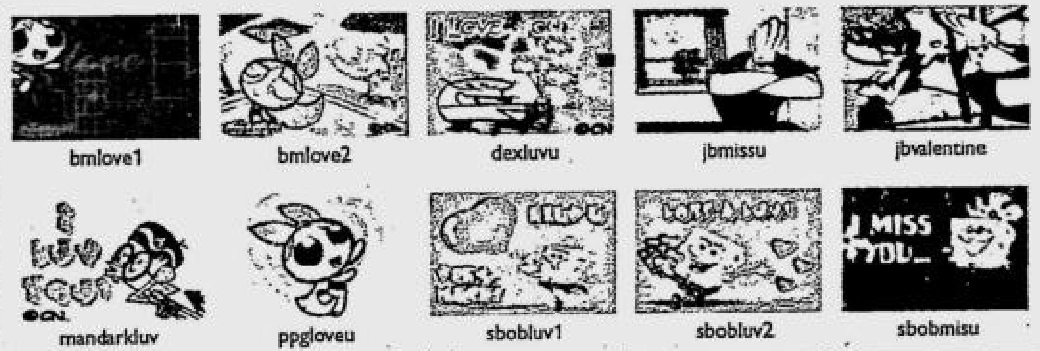

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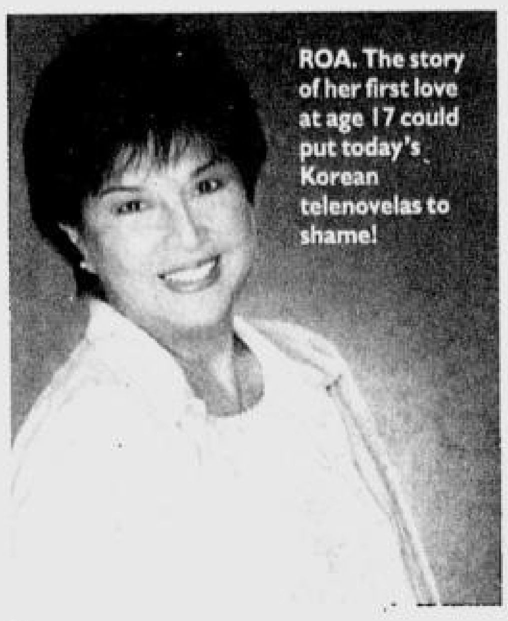
From 16 to 60, and life lessons in between



ROA. The story of her first love at age 17 could put today's Korean telenovelas to shame!

By Boots Anson Roa

MY late father, actor Oscar Moreno, used to call it "*lumang* album" time—his metaphor for succumbing to age. Everytime he would leaf through his movie clippings from the '40s to the '60s, he would wax nostalgic over his days at Sampaguita Pictures. Then, he would repeat memorable lines from his favorite films.

As he suffered from liver cirrhosis and renal failure and drew closer to his demise on July 19, 2003, our "*lumang* album" episodes became more frequent.

Captive audience

All my siblings live in the US. So, as the only child living with him, I became his "captive audience." I stopped whatever I was doing, looked at the faces I had practically memorized, and repeatedly listened to his favorite encounters.

Lately, I had to leaf through my clippings for props and visual aids for ABS-CBN's "Maala-ala Mo Kaya" episode on my 40-year marriage to Pete. Curiously, I began to relish the task and held Pete captive with my reminiscences—telltale signs of turning 60 and succumbing to the "*lumang* album" syndrome!

It doesn't hurt to be 60. As my father often said when kidded about his age: "OK *lang tumanda, basta may pinagkatandaan.*" In my case, I am proud to turn 60 (on Jan.30). It has made me wiser.

In my years at the Assumption convent, I was a *supladita, intrigera, pilosopa* and *bratinella*, despite being a bright girl with above-average looks. I was not spared quarrels with siblings and classmates, some of which I started. Not one to be physical, though, I remember only one moment of violence:

Electric fan

When I hurled an electric fan at my brother, who kept teasing me about our neighbor who I thought looked despicable with his braces. Besides, when he was in seventh grade at the Ateneo and I was in Grade 6, he would call me and say "I love you." Then, he would bang the phone on me.

Those were the days when I allowed my parents' quarrels to engender mute bitterness towards them. Their pending separation affected my grades and put me on defensive mode. I envied my cousin who had a close-knit family, and whose father provided for them very responsibly.

My "conversion" to the present-day Boots came after my seventh-grade retreat under Fr. Lorenzo Ma. Guerrero, SJ. It was not a conversion to match that of my favorite saint Paul (then Saul of Tarsus), on his way to Damascus. There was no bolt of lightning to usher in God's thunderous "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Rather, it was a plain and quiet voice that struck the message that I would keep with me all my life: "There is nothing that we have that is not God's gift, and He gives gifts not because we deserve them, but because He is good and all-loving."

It was a 180-degree turn, marked by a vocation during my sophomore year: I went to our principal, the down-to-earth Mother Angela, and confessed that I wanted to become a nun.

Encouraged

In those days, high school graduates from the Assumption were encouraged to stay for college, or at least continue in a sectarian school.

I was taken aback when she advised me to follow my parents' wish and enroll at UP to "loosen up a bit" and get rid of my "scruples." It was my first big lesson on not taking myself too seriously, while engaging in serious business—like career options.

After 11 years in convent school, "culture shock" hit me with tsunami strength as I went through freshman year at UP: Queue up at registration, wrangle your schedule through the block system, run from one building to another across the Oval, and battle stiffness spawned by self-consciousness.

In hindsight, which is always 20-20, I was being self-centered. People made me believe I was special. I believed them and almost got carried away. And *that* really made me average.

My UP training not only "loosened me up," I am grateful for its lessons on open-mindedness and tolerance: About the diversity of family and domestic circumstances, and how these affected every student on campus. It was not a matter of being right or wrong, it was about being different.

"Terrors" among professors may have hurled insults more painful than the proverbial "sticks and stones that hurt my bones," but they have cemented in me the values of accountability, discipline and commitment. These have shielded me from needless pleasure, comfort and complacency that have no place in my chosen milieu: media, in particular, and public service, in general.

My "first love" at age 17, while a college sophomore, could put today's Korean telenovelas to shame. Because I came from a dysfunctional family—my parents had already separated by then—and my boyfriend's mother would not have me! After all, he was "old rich" and "*de-buena familia.*"

So, we had to keep the relationship secret, and he had to pretend he was seeing another girl in our group to appease his parents—until they eventually fell in love! Then he contracted cancer and died at an early age! *(To be concluded)*

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5. Deadline of entries:
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   Grand Draw : SIS, GMA 7, March 31, 2005, 10:30 to 11:30 am
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2	MEET THE FOCKERS	ELEKTRA	ELEKTRA	GUARANTEED SEATS THX ELEKTRA 1 30 3 45, 6:00, 8 15, 10 30	MEET THE FOCKERS
3	IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE	MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX ELEKTRA 12 30 2 50, 5.10, 7 30, 9 50	GUARANTEED SEATS ELEKTRA 2 15 4 30, 6 45, 9:00, 11:15	SUPER BABIES: BABY GENIUSES 2
4	OCEAN'S 12	KUNG FU HUSTLE	OCEAN'S 12	GUARANTEED SEATS IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE 1 30 3 30 5 30 7 30 9 30 11 30	KUNG FU HUSTLE
5	KUNG FU HUSTLE		KUNG FU HUSTLE	GUARANTEED SEATS OCEAN'S 12 1 30 4 00 6 30 9 00 11 30	
6			MEET THE FOCKERS		
7			WHITE NOISE		

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 MEET THE FOCKERS 11 40, 2 10, 4 40, 7 10, 9:40
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Workshops enliven Karangalan confab

ABRERA. CCP chairperson.

By Nestor U. Torre

WE made it a point to catch the Karangalan Conference at the Cultural Center of the Philippines last weekend, because we believe in its theme of excellence and peaceful societal transformation.

Much too often, we Filipinos love to focus on the negative and to blame others for our woes, so it was inspiring to focus on the other, more positive side of our national make-up.

Last Jan. 21, the conference participants were enthusiastically welcomed by the CCP Chairperson Emily Abrera, and Nicanor Perlas detailed how the three-day conference would go. Walden Bello spoke on globalization, and Von Hernandez expatiated on our toxic environment, and what can be done about it.

Topics

In the afternoon, there were workshops on various topics, and we sampled them. We first sat in on a talk on spirituality at the Dream Theater, then moved on to a discussion of environmental issues by Haribon at the Little Theater.

At the theater's backstage, there was another talk on the origins of the universe many billions of years ago. It was a heady experience to be brought back to the very dawn of creation, and then to try to appreciate the awesome dimensions of today's expanding universe.

Discussion

At the Silangan venue, there were three workshops going on. We began with a discussion on developing personal self-worth, then briefly caught a talk on motivating local government units to better serve the public.

We lingered longest at a workshop on waste reduction and the intelligent use of waste material, and picked up some useful pointers.

Back at the Little Theater lobby, there was a colorful and creative exhibit of trees made from all sorts of unlikely materials, including *bakya* and fans!

The imaginative exhibit underscored the artistry and creativity of the Filipino, which were further highlighted throughout the conference, by way of "artistic responses" by different outstanding performers, interspersed between the designated speakers' speeches.

Thoughts

In the late afternoon, the conference proper resumed at the CCP Main Theater, with a talk on the country's future by Shiela Coronel, followed by Tony Tan Caktion sharing his thoughts on the role of business in nation-building.

After dinner, movie director Maryo delos Reyes spoke on how he came up with "Magnifico," and the much-awarded film was shown.

The following day, CCP President Nes Jardin spoke on the role of culture in

WORKSHOPS/ A3-3

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Hope through TV education

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

LAST Jan. 20, the launch of Television for Education in Muslim Mindanao (TEAM-Mindanao) organized by the Knowledge Channel Foundation Inc. was attended by representatives from USAID. They pledged to support a six-year program that puts together the KCFI, Amore, Sered and other partners of E-TV (educational television) to offer satellite-based education programs to selected schools in five provinces and one city in the ARMM region, school administrators, teachers and pupils.

Gift

At Datu Paglas Central School, the pupils received a 29" TV set and a satellite dish to hook up to the Knowledge Channel. It was the 1,408th school in the country to receive the Knowledge Channel's "Gift of Knowledge."

The KCFI was founded by the Lopez Group of Companies five years ago to bring people together through education.

The Municipality of Datu Paglas has long been a hotbed of rebellion. But, with the leadership of the Paglas brothers (former Mayor Datu Toto Paglas and current Mayor Totoy Paglas), who spearheaded social and infrastructure projects in their community, the small town became a showcase for achieving peace and development in Mindanao.

Vision

Ms Rina Lopez-Bautista, executive director of KCFI, shared that the people behind the Lopez group are relentless in the pursuit of the vision of a nation with educated, empowered and responsible citizens through the use of a medium they know best.

ABS-CBN was represented by Cedie Lopez Vargas, SkyCable was represented by Euan Fannell, and First Philippine Holdings has provided resources in the hope that the Knowledge Channel would reach more Filipinos and touch lives.

Resources

Bautista said, "It will take a lot of resources to bring the Knowledge Channel to 40,000 schools around the country." Fortunately, they have found a partner in USAID, represented that day by Scott Bellard and Tom Kral.

Their stake in this? A better world!

E-mail mandy-navasero@yahoo.com or call 896-3208

TOTO PAGLAS. Spearheads showcase for peace and development in Mindanao.

Workshops

From page A3-2

integral and sustainable development; Chin-Chin Gutierrez on the youth; Jess Robledo on effective urban management; the PNOC Solar project Team on renewable energies; and Sr. Mary John Mananzan on now spirituality can create a better nation. Excerpts of the folk epic, "Hudhud," were also shown.

Information technologies

On Jan. 23, Florencio Abad spoke on quality education; Gerry Ablaza on information technologies; Nicanor Perlas on building a visionary Philippines, and the Greenbelt 3 Design Team on the city of the future.

Thanks for the inspiring words, thoughts and initiatives, everyone! From here on in, may we stop harping on the "no" in Filipino, and focus instead on "yes"!

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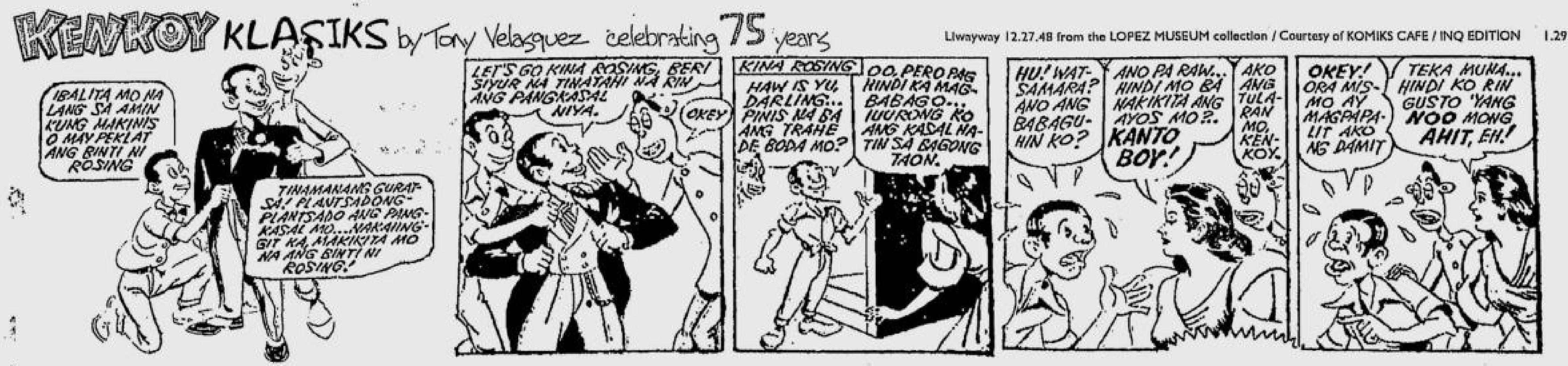
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KINA ROSING
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OO, PERO PAG HINDI KA MAG-BABAGO... IUURONG KO ANG KASAL NA-TIN SA BAGONG TAON.
HU! WAT-SAMARA? ANO ANG BABAGU-HIN KO?
ANO PA RAW... HINDI MO BA NAKIKITA ANG AYOS MO?.. KANTO BOY!
AKO ANG TULA-RAN MO, KEN-KOY.
OKEY! ORA MIS-MO AY MAGPAPA-LIT AKO NG DAMIT
TEKA MUNA... HINDI KO RIN GUSTO 'YANG NOO MONG AHIT, EH!

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FDCP head addresses movie industry issues at Senate hearing

By Nestor U. Torre

WHAT'S really ailing the Filipino movie industry? How can its problems be definitively addressed? Last Jan. 18, the Senate Committee on Public Information and Mass Media held a public hearing in relation to two initiatives that intend to address industry-related issues squarely.

The initiatives, Senate Resolution No. 4 filed by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, and No. 139 by Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., called for an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the current state of local film production, with the view in mind of "formulating an omnibus incentives program for movies, and creating a more viable, sustainable and globally competitive film industry that would eventually serve as a vital partner in nation-building."

Very valuable

To shed light on the factors involved in this matter, Laurice Guillen-Feleo, chair and CEO of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, was invited to share a position paper that the Senate deemed "very valuable with regard to its function and legislative mandate."

Guillen-Feleo readily agreed to speak at the public hearing, and first placed the discussion in perspective by providing some statistics:

"In 1997, there were 52 producers who made 202 films. Three years later, in 2000, 32 producers made 89 films. If the trend of declining production were to continue, it was feared that the country would be producing only 30 films by year 2004.

GUILLEN-FELEO. Film Development Council's mandate is developmental in nature.

"The verdict then was that the industry was dying. This bleak picture was attributed to piracy and other viewing options; smaller audiences; lower quality films, and heavy taxation.

Backdrop

"This was the backdrop against which RA 9167 was enacted into law, and the FDCP was created on June 7, 2002. I was appointed chairperson in November 2002, and the office effectively started operations in January 2003, when the Cinema Evaluation Board awarded its first favorable grade to the film, 'Magnifico.'

"As you can see, we are barely two years old. Our mandate, as the name of the agency underscores, is *developmental* in nature. It aims to address the identified problems of the industry, except piracy.

"Other than piracy, the reduction in theater audiences can be accredited to poverty, whereby people have low disposable income. The priority expenditures these days are food and texting. For entertainment, they resort to VCDs or DVDs, cable TV and even the Internet, which cost less than a theater ticket, instead of going to watch films regularly in moviehouses.

"A recent policy of the SM Cinemas to stop showing R-18 films in their theaters is said to have also contributed to the problem of smaller audiences, specifically, and the lower film output, generally.

"According to some sources, 'fly-by-night' producers of for-adult-rated films compose 30 percent of the movies produced, a significant percentage of the total film output.

Lack of funds

"What have we done therefore to address the problems of the film industry? Given some constraints, foremost of which is the lack of funds (RA 9167 is an unfunded law—we have not been included in the General Appropriations Acts of 2003 and 2004, and we have not been released such funds since we started operations in 2003), nevertheless, through volunteerism and the goodwill of people genuinely concerned with the industry, we have made some headway in reducing the problems:

"The implementation of the Cinema Evaluation System, our primary mandate, seeks to encourage producers to make better-quality films, as well as to grant tax incentives.

"In 2004, out of the 55 movies produced, 14 (25 percent) got favorable grading, and about P44 million in amusement tax rebates was released to producers. Somehow, the CBB functioned as an ICU for Filipino films during this difficult period.

Festivals

"Through the FDCP's International Film Festival Committee (IFFCOM), which assists Filipino films invited to international film festivals, 12 films received financial subsidy of about P3.2 million.

"These films, which were invited to multiple festivals, including the Cannes filmfest in France, are: 'Huling Birhen sa Lupa' (Viva), 'Munting Tinig' (Teamwork Productions), 'Hubog' (Regal), 'Tatarin' (Viva), 'Ikaw Lamang Hanggang Ngayon' (Viva), 'Magnifico' (Violett Films), 'Dekada '70' (Star Cinema), 'Noon at Ngayon' (Star Cinema), 'Tanging Yaman' (Star Cinema), 'Keka' (Viva), 'Babae sa Breakwater' (Entertainment Warehouse) and 'Bridal Shower' (Seiko).

"Other CEB-graded films currently reaping acclaim in various international film festivals and markets are 'Crying Ladies' (Unitel) and 'Naglalayag' (Angora Films Int'l). *(To be concluded)*

Source of splendor

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

WHEN mornings are chilly and dark, we appreciate the appearance of the sun so that we can bathe in its warmth. The sun enables us to see what is all around us. Its heat makes us feel more comfortable and relaxed.

In reality, our world is a place that is cold and dark. There is an obvious lack of wisdom and love. No wonder our hearts long for true warmth and light.

Darkness

In the Bhagavad-gita, the Supreme Person is the splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness. He is beyond the darkness of matter.

Whenever we see something that glows, we are immediately attracted to it. A shooting star in the dark sky or a sparkling gem catches our eyes. But, more astounding than their splendor is learning their source.

Behind such splendor is the Supreme Person who is all-attractive and lovable. To give us a glimpse of what He is truly like, we are told about the pleasant nature of the Supreme. We are given an idea of what it would feel if we opened our hearts to Him.

Because of this, we should remember the source of the sun's radiant light. We should be grateful for the vision and warmth that we receive physically and spiritually. The Supreme Person is the source of light and love. It is through his mercy that we experience warmth.

Warmth

There is no need for us to live and stay in the darkess. We can always choose to bask in invigorating warmth and light.

It is not necessary for us to live in misery and anxiety. We can live an enlightened and meaningful existence in the service and shelter of the Supreme.

Email lotuspond108@hotmail.com

Johnson Uy comes home to share his gift of music

By Andy Bais

WHAT does it take for a singer to fulfill his dream of being appreciated in his own country? For Johnson Uy, it means leaving a high-paying job in the States to take a chance on a not-so-certain future in the local entertainment scene. He's doing just that. So far, everything seems to be falling into place.

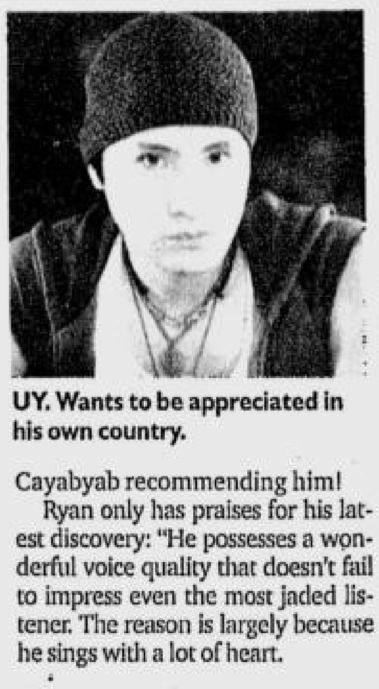
For starters, he appeared in the recent CCP musical, "Himala," and earned good reviews for singing and acting the part that Spanky Manikan portrayed in the original Ishmael Bernal film.

Homecoming concert

Johnson also staged a successful homecoming concert last month, where he captivated his audience with felt renditions of classical and Broadway tunes.

Fortunately for Johnson, even without a manager to look after his career, industry people are taking note of his gift of music. He is currently an in-demand entertainer and host for corporate and out-of-town shows.

He's keeping his fingers crossed on the prospect of signing a recording contract with a local recording company—with no less than ace musician Ryan Cayabyab recommending him!


UY. Wants to be appreciated in his own country.

Ryan only has praises for his latest discovery: "He possesses a wonderful voice quality that doesn't fail to impress even the most jaded listener. The reason is largely because he sings with a lot of heart.

Good technique

"You won't tire of listening to his voice because he has good technique, and he never gets flat or sharp. He stands out in a room full of talented singers."

Johnson's name may not ring a bell yet, but he has been performing since age 12.

He was a regular in practically all the shows of Kuya Germs on Channel 7, including a stint on "That's Entertainment,' with batchmates who included Romnick Sarmenta and Billy Crawford.

He went to the States as an exchange student at the Opera House of Wichita State University. It was during his stint at the university that he realized that he could reinvent himself—from pop to classical singer. "*Doon din na*-develop *ang hilig ko* to perform in musicals," he beams.

Principal role

He auditioned for musicals in Kansas City and landed a principal role (Freddy Hill in "My First Lady") on his first try. More musicals followed: "West Side Story" and "South Pacific," but nothing beat his excitement to audition for "Miss Saigon," even if it meant returning home to the Philippines.

"Since the first round of 'Miss Saigon' auditions in 1989, I would always end up in the final two or three *na pinagpipilian*. I always lost due to technicality—*kulang ang* papers *ko*," Johnson recalls.

But, in 1994, when another round of auditions was held, Johnson made sure that he had all the requirements needed, and prayed hard that he'd finally make the grade. Luckily, he did, and he played the role of Thuy in Germany the following year.

"I worked hard to get myself ready for my first performance. I had to memorize my lines and songs in German—*pati* blocking —in only 20 days!," he recalls.

After two years with "Miss Saigon," Johnson went back to the States. "My green card didn't allow me to be away from the States for too long," he explains.

Missing

He worked variously as a flight attendant and an insurance agent, and sang with a band in hotels and casinos in Las Vegas. But, despite earning more than enough for his needs, he felt that something was missing.

"I was singing my heart out, but my audience was too drunk to appreciate what I was doing onstage," he narrates.

So, early last year, he decided to come home and try his luck here. At the rate things are going, it seems that he has made the right decision. "My wish is to record an album *at makapasok sa puso ng* listeners. Filipinos are hard to please, but if you win them over, they'll be there forever," he says.

Based on his CD sampler, Johnson can easily give our balladeers a run for their money. We have one suggestion, though: Do away with Josh Groban's repertoire. We have too many Groban clones already!

Trip to Singapore

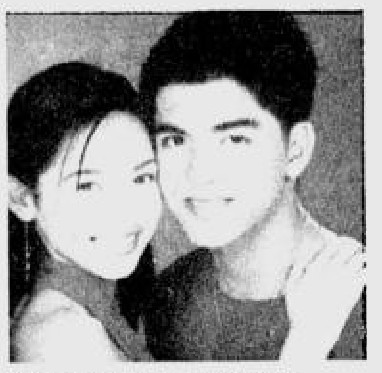
MONTAGE

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD Angela Jonyl Reyes is one lucky girl: She and her parents Ronald and Joyce, and sister Agatha, were chosen by Nickelodeon and the Singapore Tourism Board for an all-expense-paid trip to attend the Asian premiere of "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie" tomorrow at Sentosa Island, Singapore.

Angela, a Grade 1 pupil at Paco Catholic College, is a big fan of Nickelodeon, and is a regular guest at Nick's website.

The Reyeses will be joined by other lucky families from Australia, Japan, India, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and New Zealand.

The Sentosa celebration includes a Sandsculpting Luau, Bikini-Bottom themed games, dancing, and a SpongeBob SquarePants toon-a-thon.


MERCADO AND HERRAS. Important roles in GMA Films' romantic drama.

'Let the Love Begin'

In GMA Films' "Let the Love Begin," Richard Gutierrez works as a janitor in a high school in exchange for a scholarship. He grew up with his *lola* (Gloria Romero), who sells candles.

For her part, Angel Locsin is a rich and spoiled girl who's more interested in gimmicks than in her studies. Richard loves her, but is too shy to say so.

After their schooling, they go their separate ways, but their paths eventually cross again, and he turns out to be her "corporate savior."

Other important roles are played by Mark Herras, Jennylyn Mercado, and Tonton Gutierrez. "Let the Love Begin" opens on Feb. 9.

Movies on TV

On HBO, Jan. 29 at 8:55 a.m., "The Master of Disguise." 12:15 p.m., "Mission Impossible." Jan. 30 at 7:45 a.m., "School Ties." 11:45 p.m., "Live From Baghdad." Jan. 31 at 9 p.m., "Multiplicity." 11:50 p.m., "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

On Cinemax, Jan. 29 at 2 :45 p.m., "And the Band Played On." Jan. 30 at 10:40 p.m., "Dolores Claiborne." Jan. 31 at 8:30 a.m., "Charlotte Gray." 4:45 p.m., "Scent of A Woman." 7:30 p.m., "Orange County."

'Dear Sharon'

After last week's 20 wishes, Sharon Cuneta wraps up her big bash, "Dear Sharon, the Wish Upon a Mega Birthday," today at 6 p.m. on Channel 2 with 19 more requests from people all over the country.

Co-hosting the special presentation are Aga Muhlach and Bayani Agbayani. Aga performs a rousing opening number with Side A, and other celebrity guests include Marvin Agustin, Rica Peralejo and the Maneuvers.

LAUREL. New track from her "Thankful" album.

Ayen releases second single

After the successful release of her second album, "Thankful," with the carrier single, "Kailan Nga Ba?," Ayen Munji-Laurel hits the airwaves once more with her second single titles "Kapag Puso'y Nagtatampo."

The song was published By Margot Gallardo, with music by Babsie Molina, Lyrics by Edith Gallardo and musical arrangement by Marc Lopez. Acoustic guitars were provided by Ric Mercado.

"Thankful" also includes the songs "You're the Best Part of Everyday," "Kunwari Ka Pa," "Hanggang Ako Ay Mahal," "Coming Home To You," "Magandang-Maganda" (a duet with Mariella Laurel), "All About You," "Never Give You Up," "The Treasure Of My Heart" and "Pamana," with "Thankful" as the opening and closing theme.

On Valentine's Day, Ayen will be the special guest of Christopher de Leon and Tirso Cruz III in a concert titled "A Cupid's Tender Mess" (A Funny Valentine) at the Grand Ballroom of Dusit Hotel. Musical director is Mel Villena.

FERNANDEZ AND VELASQUEZ. A show together, finally.

'Queens on Fire'

Concert Queen Pops Fernandez and Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez will finally sing together in the pre-Valentine concert, "Queens on Fire," at the Ultra on Feb. 11 and 12. As a special treat for their fans, the two divas will sing many duets.

The show seeks to celebrate and empower women. Thus, it will feature songs about their sentiments, fantasies, goals and passions. Call 891-5610.

"Queens on Fire" will also be performed in the States: April 1, in San Diego; April 2, Los Angeles; April 8, Las Vegas; April 9, San Francisco; April 15, Chicago; April 17, Atlantic City; April 23, Washington, DC, and April 30, Guam.

New role for Sharmaine Arnaiz

Actress Sharmaine Arnaiz prepares for a new life as wife to Che Ochoa and mother to Ernesto Gabriel Ochoa III.

At the recent baptism of her son, the actress admitted that her acting career, and studies in Veterinary Medicine at La Salle-Araneta University have to take a back seat to this new role for a while.

She expects to be actively back in the show biz scene in a couple of months.

BAPTISM OF SHARMAINE'S SON. (From left, seated) Ara Mina, Bunny Paras and daughter Moira, (standing) Winnie Gozon, Che Ochoa with child Ernesto Gabriel Ochoa III, Sharmaine and Bibsy Carballo.

SATURDAY *Special*

'Sex for a reason' in Sundance movies

PARK CITY, Utah—If sex sells, as the advertising saying goes, the independent film world should be pleased with this year's Sundance Film Festival that features a slew of movies with explicit sexual themes and scenes.

Three generations

Teen sex, elderly sex, gay and oral sex fill a range of movies from dark comedy ("Pretty Persuasion") to "How the Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer," about three generations of Mexican women.

Among the most talked-about early films of the festival, which entered the second half of its 10-day run recently, was "Inside Deep Throat," a documentary that tells the story of the most famous porn film of all time and includes sexually explicit scenes from the original.

CAST of "Pretty Persuasion": (from left) Jane Krakowski, Evan Rachel Wood, James Woods, Elisabeth Harnois and Adi Schnall. REUTERS

DIRECTOR Fenton Bailey (with Randy Barbato, right) gets a kiss from Harry Reems. AP

Even films that do not feature sexual scenes or themes seem stripped down to basic human emotions, such as former "Friends" star David Schwimmer's portrayal of a drunken casino boss whose life spins out of control in "Duane Hopwood."

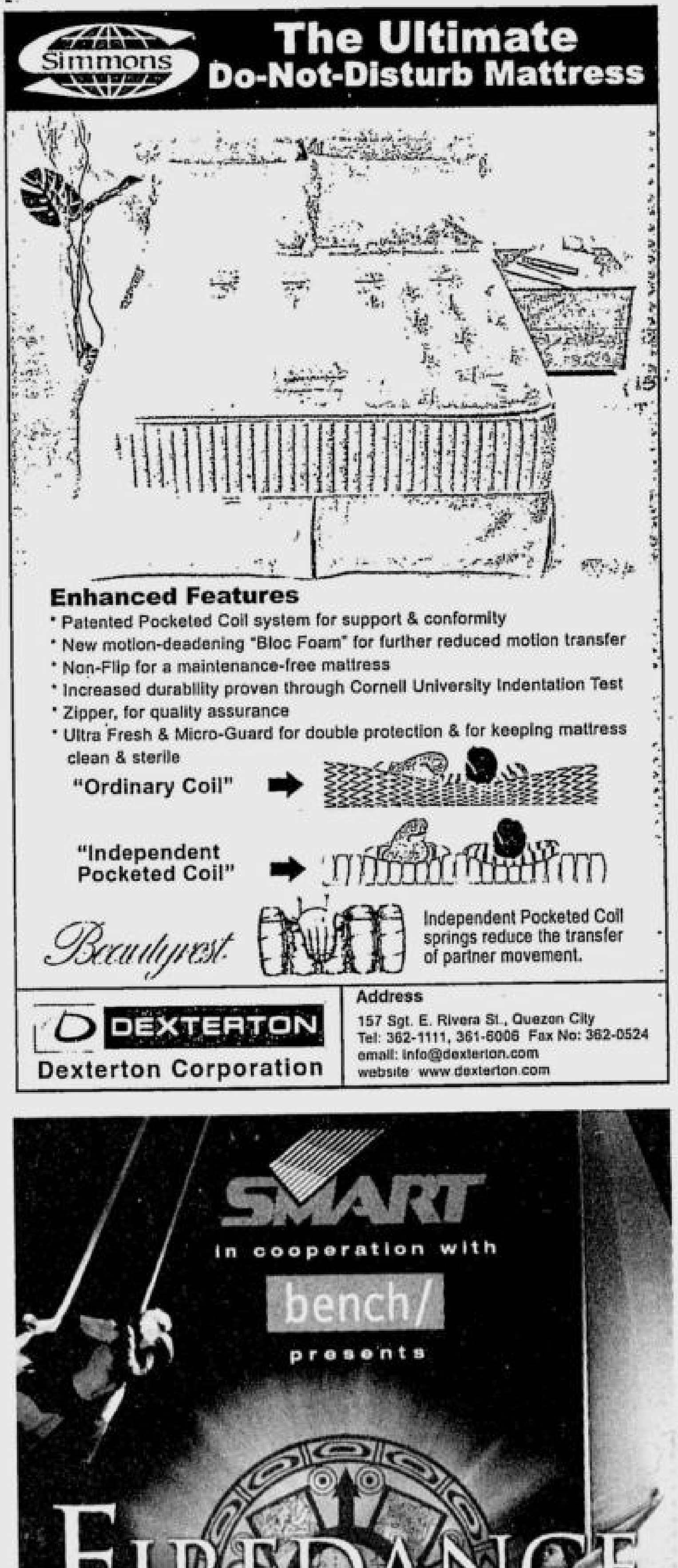
It seems to be working, so far, for the film distributors who show up at Sundance to acquire movies. Bidding has been hot. Paramount Pictures and MTV Films combined for a $9-million purchase of rap music film, "Hustle & Flow." In recent years, the top deals at the festival ranged from $2 million to $5 million.

Filmmakers say the sex in their movies is there for a reason, not just to challenge mores in an increasingly conservative United States.

Issue

"Sex is designed specifically to hit on an issue: Underage sex and teen sex," said Marcos Siega, 35, director of "Pretty Persuasions. "I don't think adults realize how rampant sex is in our culture today."

Siega's satire follows a high school girl, played by Evan Rachel Wood, who uses sex as a weapon to manipulate others. It has been a hot ticket in the first half of the festival, as has "Garcia Girls," which explores the sexual longings of a teenage girl, her mother and her grandmother. *Reuters*



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Kitchie Nadal has ear for catchy melodies

By Noelani Torre

THERE'S no escaping Kitchie Nadal these days. The girl just seems to be everywhere — or at least on every radio station we've tuned in to in the past few months. We've been hearing all sorts of people humming the refrain to her ubiquitous "Run" as well, and we can't count the number of times we've spotted her face adorning some adoring guy's desktop.

Certified hits

No doubt about it, this 24-year-old guitar-strumming crooner and her self-titled debut are both certified hits—with the album turning gold shortly after its release late last year. Not that this is the first time she's been in the limelight.

For the information of those who've been living under a rock during the past couple of years, Kitchie Nadal used to be the lead vocalist of the band Mojofly. She left the group in June of 2003 in order to concentrate on her studies (she was then majoring in psychology and education at La Salle).

"I had to file a leave of absence from school when I was with Mojofly, or I did not take full-load units," she said in an interview back then.

NADAL. Her voice has a brash, lusty quality.

"In the beginning *pa lang, sinabi ko na na* school would be my priority," she explained recently. "Now, I can do things at my own pace."

Even after only a quick listen to her self-titled solo debut, we can tell you that Kitchie hasn't suffered a bit from her one year's absence from the scene.

The 10-track album reminds us why she's been standing out even when she was sharing the spotlight—there's hardly anything that can beat the impact of that powerful, "sweet-and-sour" voice.

She's often been compared to '70s rock star Sampaguita, and we can see why. Kitchie's voice has the same brash, lusty quality that characterized the latter's, though hers is tempered by edge-softening huskiness.

A distinctive voice and a fresh, pretty face make a winning combination, as evinced by her continuing success. She looks, a friend of ours once said, like a five-year-old. Her huge Audrey Hepburn-ish eyes and innocent look contrast well with the surprisingly mature feel of her vocals.

Arsenal

Looks and vocal talent aren't the only weapons in her arsenal, however: Kitchie also has a talent for songwriting. Granted, she's not quite there yet, lyrics-wise—lines like "if all else fail," "frays of comfort" and "even if her bones are dry to hear you sing and cry" are among the most cringe-worthiest lines we've heard recently—but she has an ear for catchy melodies and arrangements that showcase her voice.

With all this working for her—as well as a rapidly growing fan base—Kitchie Nadal's future looks particularly bright.

In this album, Kitchie is joined by bassists Aaron Cambronero and Rommel de la Cruz, guitarist Jeff de Castro, and drummers Marco Guzman, Vic Mercado and Bagets. Released under Warner Music and 12 Stone Records, "Kitchie Nadal" was produced by Jack Rufo and Kitchie Nadal, with Tommy Tanchanco and Roca Cruz as executive producers.

NOW SHOWING

Jennifer Garner in implausible superheroine tale

By Rito P. Asilo

"Elektra"

D: Rob Bowman
S: Jennifer Garner, Goran Visnjic

IF logic is not an indispensable element to you, then Rob Bowman's film adaptation of the Marvel comic book character may just be your kind of cinematic action. But, if you watch "Elektra"—spun-off from Mark Steven Johnson's successful "Daredevil" flick—to nitpick, you will find numerous quibbles to complain about.

With nary a mention of Matt Murdock and "The Man Without Fear" (portrayed by Ben Affleck in Johnson's 2003 film), in the tortured protagonist's not-so-distant past, the movie depicts Elektra Natchios (Jennifer Garner) as an inscrutable assassin-for-hire hounded by a history of parental abuse.

But, when the knife-wielding Elektra is sent by her agent—yes, Virginia, even assassins have agents these days!—on a $2-million assignment to liquidate handsome widower Mark Miller ("E.R.'s" Goran Visnjic) and his "gifted" daughter, Abby (Kirsten Prout), the dysfunctional but endearing father-and-daughter team brings back our protagonist's longing for romantic intimacy and human connection.

GARNER. Deserves better material.

Now, she's torn between honoring her commitment (see, there's honor among killers, too) and saving the Millers from unscrupulous people like her. It's a good thing she didn't sign a contract, right?

The movie glosses over a narrative that tries to address many issues, but it is muddled by its inability to focus on a particular storyline: She's obsessive-compulsive, she mistrusts no one, *but* she starts to fold when the handsome father of her ward is "forced" to invite her over for Christmas dinner. Go figure.

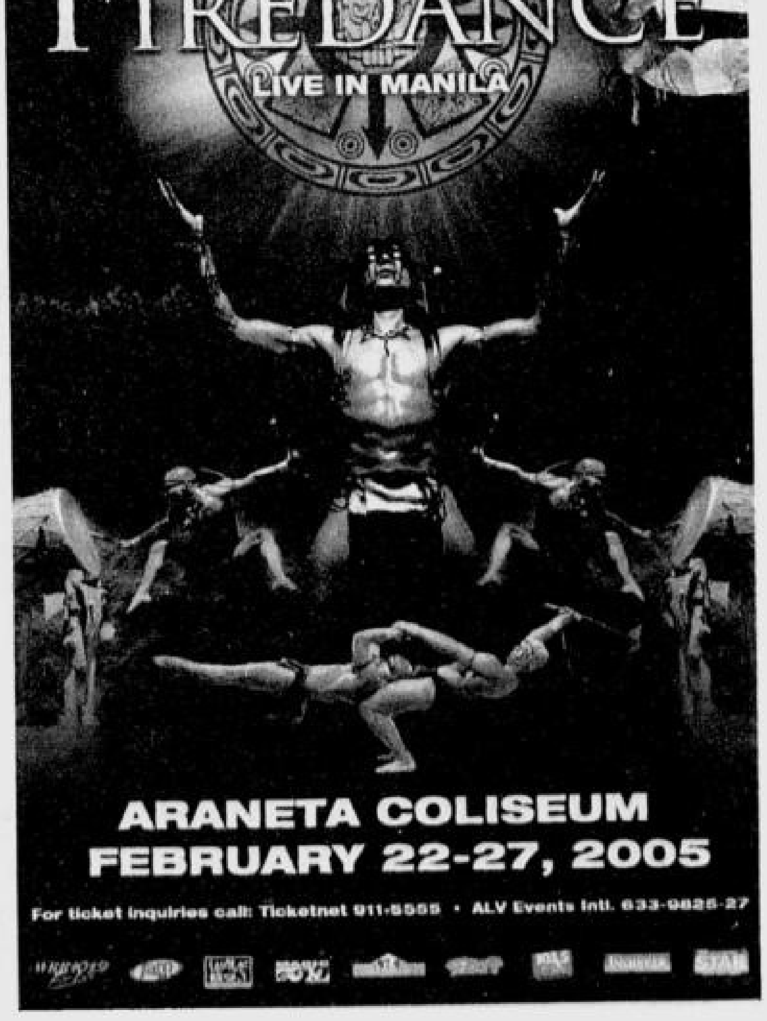
Garner is fast on her feet, and is breathtakingly beautiful as Elektra. But, Bowman's film is an implausible actioner, despite its engrossing sequences and quirky characters (a man with "active" tattoos, a life-sucking nymphet, etc.). But, "Elektra" is also a sci-fi vehicle that's mostly devoid of logic, and Garner a charming actress worthy of better material.

"It's All About Love"

D: Thomas Vinterberg
S: Joaquin Phoenix, Claire Danes

It's 2021, a mere 16 years into the future. Yet, the parallel "reality" that Danish director Thomas Vinterberg ("The Celebration") creates on film is a world very different from ours. In this not-so-distant future, heartbreak and loneliness can literally kill, and people would drop like flies when they fall victims to

JENNIFER/ A4-2



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Jennifer Garner in implausible . . .

From page A4-1

those lethal "afflictions."

Meanwhile, the Earth has become a world of fantasy: Snowstorms rage over Brooklyn's mid-July skyline; Uganda's African weather drops way below 20 degrees; children in New Delhi inexplicably float on air; even the mere act of drinking tap water is deemed unsafe because it freezes in barely two minutes!

PHOENIX. Love in a world of fantasy.

Amidst these weird curiosities, the film follows John (Joaquin Phoenix) on his way to New York to sign the final draft of his divorce from figure-skating superstar Elena (Claire Danes). It has been years since he last saw her and, despite appearances, sparks still fly between them—but, as we all know, love is sometimes not enough.

Vinterberg, co-founder of the Dogma filmmaking style, coaxes empathetic performances from his actors and constantly waxes visual poetry in this eerie tale of love, intrigue and adventure—not quite the Dogma style (hand-held camera, etc.) that we expect from him:

The film's camerawork is decisive and steady. Its surreal atmosphere is further aided by Zbigniew Preisner's enchanting musical score that captures the mood of a fresh, irrepressibly original story.

Sean Penn makes an intriguing appearance as John's brother, who is afflicted with an illness that has him compulsively traveling non-stop in planes (he's afraid of touching the ground)—although his character dilutes the story by spewing out lines like: "The chaos of the world is reflected in the souls of human beings." Say what, Mr. Penn?

Gilbert

From page A4-4

comedy, horror, fantasy—comes naturally to him. He likes variety.

"You can bring the technique from one genre to another. Sometimes, when I do an episode of 'Maala-ala Mo Kaya;' I infuse light moments *para hindi masyadong mabigat sa dibdib.* I put rhythm into dramas. Timing, pacing and rhythm are needed in comedies. I honed my skills in these areas because I started out in comedies," he relates.

Idols

Direk Gilbert cites Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon, Lino Brocka, Alfred Hitchcock, Brian de Palma and Steven Spielberg as his idols.

"I'm an avid fan of Tom Cruise. I also like "St. Elmo's Fire" and "Carrie," and Spielberg's movies because of their technical magnitude. Movies by Brocka, Bernal and De Leon have relevance, depth and insight," Direk Gilbert smiles. So, expect "Dreamboy" to have some depth and insight, even if it's "only" a romantic movie.

Oscar

From page A4-3

shown on ABC.

"The struggle for a woman of color to find good material is still very present, and it's a struggle I fight daily," Berry told reporters recently. "Women have a hard time finding good material, whether she's black, white, sky blue or pink."

Projects

Developing her own projects is probably the best way to get to do good roles. Berry said she has four in the works right now.

"I sift through scripts that come my way, and try to make the best out of what comes. But, it's about making my own reality," she said. AP

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8 ELEKTRA

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8 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
9 OCEAN'S TWELVE
10 WHITE NOISE

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sm city pampanga
1 ELEKTRA
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3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
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5 HAYOP SA PORMA,HAYOP SA GANDA
6 OUT OF REACH

sm city baguio
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 WHITE NOISE
3 OUT OF REACH
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sm city batangas
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2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
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4 UNO

sm city dasmariñas
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3 HELLWOLF
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sm city marilao
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4 BLADE TRINITY
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6 WHITE NOISE
7 MAD HOUSE
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city lucena
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 HAYOP SA PORMA, HAYOP SA GANDA
4 BLADE TRINITY

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 SINE UG KATILINGBAN
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
6 UNO
7 BLADE TRINITY
8 ELEKTRA

sm city iloilo
1 UNO
2 RESERVED
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4 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
5 NED KELLY
6 BLADE TRINITY
7 RESERVED
8 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

sm city davao
1 ELEKTRA
2 UNO
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 BIRTH
5 ELEKTRA
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm city cagayan de oro
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 UNO
4 ELEKTRA

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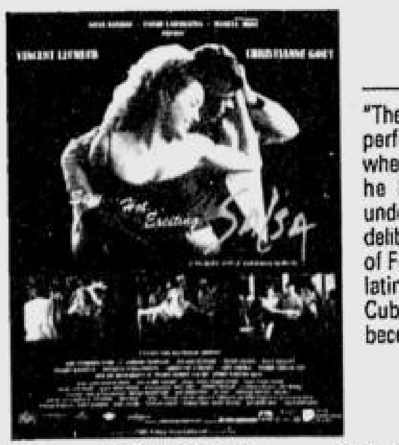

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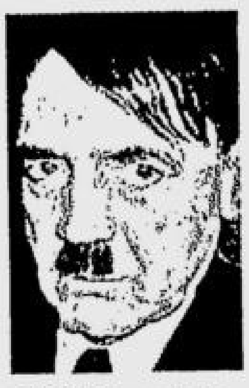
Hitler film wins Oscar nod



GANZ. Humanistic approach to the German dictator.

LOS ANGELES—Can a film that humanizes Adolf Hitler win an Oscar? Oliver Hirschbiegel hopes so.

He is the director of "Downfall," a film about the last days of Adolf Hitler's life, which was nominated for an Oscar recently as one of five foreign language films.

Also nominated were "All it is in Heaven," a Swedish film; "The Chorus" from France, Spain's "The Sea Inside," and "Yesterday," the first film ever nominated from South Africa.

Few films have been as controversial in modern-day Germany as "Downfall," which stars Swiss actor Bruno Ganz as Hitler.

Some critics in Germany savaged it, though the US film industry newspaper Variety hailed it as "a powerful Gotterdammerung centered on the last 10 days of the Fuehrer."

Controversial

"My film is very controversial. Are we as filmmakers allowed to depict Hitler as a man, or are we supposed to depict him as a monster?," he said. "We owe it to the victims to show that this was not a demon from hell, but a man born in Austria and raised in Germany. I am very proud of this movie. It is my best work."

Variety said the film would "undoubtedly raise discussions in some quarters over its coolly objective, humanistic approach to the characters and subject matter."

Perhaps the best known of the foreign film candidates is Spain's "The Sea Inside," about a quadriplegic's 30-year battle to take his own life. It has received several prizes, including a Golden Globe for best foreign language film, and a best actor prize for Javier Bardem at the Venice Film Festival.

Struggles

"Yesterday," a film in Zulu about the struggles of a woman in a small village fighting HIV/AIDS, became the first South African movie nominated for a foreign language Oscar.

It was written and directed by Darrell James Roodt. Roodt said he hoped the nomination would open the way for other movies to be made in ethnic languages like Zulu.

"In the first 100 years (of South African cinema), this is the first proper Zulu movie," he said.

The film was made with the support of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and HBO. Earlier this month, Mandela announced that his son Makgatho had died of AIDS. *Reuters*

BERRY. Women continue to struggle.

Oscar hasn't brought Berry great roles

LOS ANGELES—Winning the Academy Award doesn't mean you'll suddenly be bombarded with offers for great movie roles, says Halle Berry.

The best thing that happened to her in the week after winning the best actress award was a phone call from Oprah Winfrey, asking her to play a part in "Their Eyes Were Watching God." The movie, a Winfrey production, will soon be

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ITS ALL ABOUT LOVE PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:15	WHITE NOISE PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	ELEKTRA PG13 11:40,1:50,4:00, 6:10,8:20,10:30

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1:50 / 4:10 / 6:30 / 8.50
MEET THE FOCKERS
12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9.30
OCEAN'S TWELVE
1:50 / 4:20 / 6:50 / 9.20
WHITE NOISE
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2. MEET THE FOCKERS 12:45 / 3:15 / 5:45 / 8:15
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2 MEET THE FOCKERS 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10.00	7 WHITE NOISE 12 20 2:40 5:00 7:20 9:40
3 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION 10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00	8 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:40 3 00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 BLADE TRINITY 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 ELEKTRA 11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30	10 MADHOUSE 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ELEKTRA	10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
2 WHITE NOISE 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:50	5 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION 10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
3 MEET THE FOCKERS 10:20 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	6 BLADE TRINITY 10:20 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
4 RESERVE	7 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193/99 • 682-8280

1 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION 11:10 1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10	5 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:30 10:30
2 ELEKTRA 10:10 12:45 3:20 5:55 8:30	6 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 8:45 10:30
3 MADHOUSE 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10	7 ELEKTRA 12:10 2:45 5:20 7:55 10:30
4 WHITE NOISE 11:10 1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10	8 BLADE TRINITY 11 50 2:30 5 10 7.50 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 ELEKTRA 3 20 5 55 8 30	5 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25	6 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION 11:00 1:20 3:40 6 00 8 25
3 MADHOUSE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55	7 TWO BROTHERS 1.00 3 00 5 00 7.00
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1 RAISE YOUR VOICE 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8 30	3 WHITE NOISE 11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30
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KNOWLEDGE CHANNEL

Building bridges through education, entertainment

By Rito P. Asilo

SOME years ago, we joined a brave team of actors for a performance tour of Lourdes "Bing" Pimentel's popular religious musical revue, "Nasaan si Hesus?," around northern Mindanao during an outbreak of hostilities between warring government and rebel forces.

We had some heady moments and memorable stories to tell about that experience as we commuted from one place to another.

Collaboration

So, when we flew to Mindanao last week to witness the launch of "Television Education for Muslim Mindanao" (TEAM-Mindanao), The Knowledge Channel's groundbreaking three-year collaboration with its partners like USAID and Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (Amore), there were a number of movie-moment scenarios playing in our mind. This time, we thought our trip with mostly Manila-based journalists further down south and west of Mindanao was going to be more "significant." Indeed, the trip was memorable—but, in a good way.

Impoverished schools

The TEAM-Mindanao project aims to give satellite-assisted cable TV access to The Knowledge Channel's curriculum-based programs to impoverished schools in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), specifically in Maguindanao, Tawi Tawi, Lanao del Sur, Basilan and Sulu, to help address socio-political and economic issues through education, entertainment and technology.

As KCFI director Rina Lopez Bautista states: "We and our partners tirelessly pursue a vision of empowerment by tapping the power of television to use education in addressing problems in literacy and poverty."

MUSLIM dance is performed at Maguindanao's La Frutera banana plantation.

The Knowledge Channel's Rosan Cruz and Joyce Tee admit that it hasn't been easy. For one, some schools don't even have electricity to support KCFI's facilities. When we visited one of the recipient schools, we saw some 50 students earnestly watching a math module as they sat huddled close together on *banigs*. But, KCFI is taking things one step at a time.

Tee reveals that the project aims to assist 150 more public schools within the ARMM region, and the buck starts at the formerly war-afflicted Datu Paglas community. She declares, "The choice to launch the program in the boom town of Datu Paglas is no coincidence."

Indeed, the economic miracle spearheaded by the youthful Muslim leader Datu Ibrahim "Toto" Paglas, a 1999 TOYM awardee for countryside development (for turning his small agricultural community from a war zone to a thriving economic zone), is an inspiring story of hope—a tale that needs to be told, and an example that deserves emulation.

Curriculum

Cruz shares, "Other than modules on mathematics, science and English, The Knowledge Channel's curriculum also includes programs on livelihood and peace education."

Truth to tell, we grew up in Davao del Sur, and only relocated to Manila when we had to pursue a higher education at UST. But, when we were growing up in that relatively "peaceful" area in Mindanao, we recall nights when our dad and mom—both physicians—would pack our bags, leave our town (Padada), and travel some 70 kms to stay in Davao City over the weekend—and it wasn't for leisure or pleasure.

Ideological conflicts

My parents would hear rumors of an impending rebel attack—and off they went to make sure that we would stay safe! These days, the residents of Mindanao, while still struggling from ideological conflicts, have something to feel optimistic about, and with good reason:

Last week, when we met some of Mindanao's young, open-minded, dynamic leaders like the fortysomething Paglas, General Santos City Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr, 30-year-old congresswoman Darlene Antonino Custodio and Sarangani province's 27-year-old governor, Miguel Dominguez (the youngest in the country), we knew that, with people like these, there's hope yet for our beloved but long-neglected Mindanao to find its peace, after all.

'Fame' is now a reality TV talent search

By Noelani Torre

"FAME" has had several incarnations in the past two decades. In 1980, it was a movie musical (that's the one most of us probably know, with Irene Cara and Paul McCrane); it was a TV series from 1982-1987 (with Debbie Allen and Janet Jackson); it moved to the stage in 1988, and failed to re-launch itself as a TV series in 1997 ("Fame L.A."). The most recent version of this popular brand name is—what else?—"Fame," a reality TV talent search launched in 2003 by NBC.

Our cable channels not being quite as up to date as we think they are, we were able to watch one of the first episodes a couple of days ago. Hosted by famous dancer/choreographer Debbie Allen and *NSync singer Joey Fatone, the show is like "American Idol," but with a few significant differences. There's no Simon Cowell crusher-of-dreams character here, and "Fame" is more than just a singing contest. What they're looking for are "the finest singers/dancers with real star potential."

Dance teacher

Allen calls it "the triple threat." A "Fame" veteran (she played the role of dance teacher Lydia Grant in both the movie and the first TV series), she is the Svengali in this particular production, though she's no string-pulling martinet. In fact, the only Svengali-like thing about her is that she's the one in charge of sifting through the Fame wannabes and for training the ones who do make it to the semifinals.

TIANGCO. Fil-Am finalist.

"The enormous success of the movie, 'Chicago,' as well as talents like J.Lo, Usher and Justin Timberlake," she said, "have rekindled the country's appetite for performers who sing, dance and have that bigger-than-life presentation that have helped them achieve fame. I am looking forward to finding the best of the best!"

That's a tough job for both judges and contestants. It's not easy to look for folks endowed with "the triple threat," nor is it easy competing with them. The contestants here, however, are given more training than their "American Idol" counterparts.

After they get selected as semifinalists, Allen proceeds to put them through what she calls a "boot camp," where they'll perform in front of the judges and receive feedback which they should keep in mind for their actual televised performance.

There are four batches of semifinalists, each with six contestants. Three out of the six are eliminated per show until they end up with 12 finalists. It's only during the finals that the folks at home get to cast their own votes, which makes this less a popularity contest than "Idol."

Celebrity judges

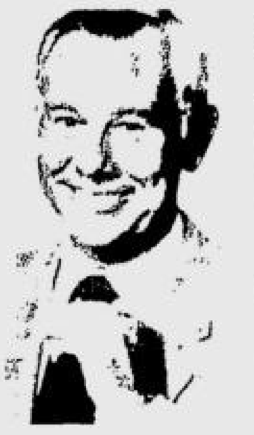
"Fame's" celebrity judges are Carnie Wilson, JoJo, and Johnny Wright. Wilson was a member of the pop group Wilson Phillips (whose records have gone platinum), a TV talk show host, and a bestselling author. JoJo is one of Los Angeles' top DJs, and is one of LA radio's "most recognizable personalities."

Wright is the heavy-hitter in this trio, what with his having managed the Backstreet Boys, *NSync, Britney Spears, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, and Boyz II Men. He also formed the Wright Entertainment Group (WEG) and the Wright International Records and Entertainment (WIRE).

In the episode we were able to watch, Jamisen Tiangco, a Fil-Am from Florida, was able to make it to the finals. Though her voice wasn't quite that spectacular, she was a smooth dancer, and there's no denying the impact of those looks!

Johnny Carson's legacy lives on

By Nestor U. Torre


CARSON. Found his true calling as a broadcast personality.

PIONEERING talk show host Johnny Carson recently passed away at 79 years of age. His achievements were deemed so significant, at least from the pop-cultural perspective, that his death rated headlines. What was it about Carson that made his peers and fans mourn his passing so intensely?

Born in 1925, Carson served notice early in his life that he was meant to be a performer. At only 14, he was already entertaining paying patrons with magic tricks.

But, he soon found his true calling as a broadcast personality. He joined the staff of a radio station in Omaha, Nebraska, where he was eventually "discovered" by the popular comedian, Red Skelton.

First attempt

Carson worked with Skelton for a spell, but his first attempt at hosting a talk show flopped. However, he didn't let this early disappointment get him down. He rebounded with the TV quiz show, "Who Do You Trust."

Soon, word got around in the TV biz that Carson was a promising host, whose strongest suit was his ability to ad-lib in a perceptive and witty manner.

So, he was one of the young hotshots considered to replace the "Tonight Show's" host, Jack Paar. He didn't feel that he was ready for the high-visibility job, but NBC pursued him until he finally agreed.

Right off the bat, Carson made the show his own. What was his edge? Show biz observers say that it was the fact that his humor was never mean-spirited. In the dog-eat-dog working environment of television, that's quite a unique and refreshing trait!

As for Carson's guests on the show (he had some 10,000 of them through the years), they liked the way that he made them feel like they were at home.

What about the TV audience? Viewers liked Carson because, as one of them put it, "He made us laugh at ourselves."

Despite his great success, however, Carson finally decided to retire after 30 years. His decision shocked the TV trade. How could he resign from the "Tonight Show" when he was at the top of his game?

Anachronism

Precisely, Carson retorted, he wanted to leave with a bang, and not with a whimper. And he certainly didn't want to be dragged out, flailing and screaming, long after he had become a walking and barely breathing anachronism.

So, Carson retired when he was still hot, and he was replaced by Jay Leno. Flashforward many years, Leno has just announced his own retirement five years from now, and he's already handpicked his own replacement, Conan O'Brien.

From Steve Allen to Paar, Paar to Carson, Carson to Leno, and Leno to O'Brien—that's quite a chronology of unique personalities, each very different from the others. That's how the "Tonight" show has kept itself interesting and unpredictable through the years.

Still, it's generally agreed that Johnny Carson was the most popular host of all, so his death was seen to be the passing of an era.

How will Carson be remembered? Let's hear it from his most important descendants, David Letterman and Jay Leno:

David Letterman: "I'm so proud that, even up to the last year of his life, Johnny would send me jokes to do. I cherish that. After all, he was the real McCoy—all the rest of us are merely pretenders."

Jay Leno: "No single individual has had such big impact on TV as Johnny Carson. He was the gold standard!"

Culture of gossip belittles substantial role of television

By Behn Cervantes

GOSSIP has of late become staple TV fare. The leading stations outdo each other in the pungency of the show biz-related controversies they regularly deliver to the viewing public. They take pride in stating how they "hunt" high and low for scandalous gossip, and announce what is mostly hearsay on a regular basis.

Scandals

In fact, television stations now employ noisy and silly gossip-mongers to dish out the latest scandals as though these juicy tidbits would enhance viewers' lives.

Because of this constant need for controversy, when they run out of big names to gossip about, they resort to "staging" scandals involving publicity-hungry starlets and sexy show biz wannabes.

Weren't we taught that *tsismis* is a habit not to be encouraged? It is intruding into other people's privacy! Since gossip is based on hearsay, prudence and good breeding demand that you do not pass it on. Furthermore, it cultivates wrong values.

Gossip exposes the subjects of controversy to scrutiny, and to quick, unfair conclusions and immediate judgment. Public perception is difficult to alter. Television gossip-mongers stoke the controversy for all its salacious worth.

On the other hand, substantial talk shows and investigative programs are being aired in the wee hours of the night to give these inconsequential shows greater importance on primetime!

Glib entertainment personalities spend hours digging dirt, assessing hearsay, and then presenting their "conclusions" to a gossip-hungry audience.

Instead of being updated on vital political, economic and social issues, the public is given sordid details about who slept with whom, and which sexy dancers are feuding once again. Who the heck really cares? Someone has to take responsibility for this aberration!

It is time for the viewing public to alert the television stations that there are other topics they would prefer to be informed about.

Role models

Why not concentrate on enlightening news and provide viewers with role models to emulate? To turn our people into a gossipy lot is to desecrate the important role of television in our lives.

Gilbert Perez is comfortable directing young stars

By Mary Ann A. Bautista

WORKING with young actors allows director Gilbert Perez to exercise his imagination and creativity. He makes it a point to inject new insights and veer away from formulas. He believes that young actors are more open to suggestions than established stars. So, working with Bea Alonzo and Piolo Pascual in "Dreamboy" has been a breeze.

"Whenever I work with actors, writers and producers, *gusto ko, may* synergy *para mas maganda.* I want us to have one direction. *Kailangan, isa lang ang* vision *namin. Kung ayaw nila ang isang bagay,* useless *lang ang hirap ng gagawin namin.* Older actors are already respected, so if you ask them to do something unconventional, they have a tendency to reject the idea.

"Young actors are still learning. You can experiment, and they don't mind. I want nuances in my scenes, and they are open to them. They give suggestions on how we can improve scenes. Fresh *ang* ideas *nila, minsan, nakakabigla.* Pero, may veteran actors who welcome change," Perez remarks.

Production assistant

Direk Gilbert finished communication arts at the Ateneo, but he took a leave for one semester to do actual TV work as a production assistant for "TV Pow!" on Channel 2. After graduation, he found himself working at ABS-CBN producing TV shows like "Atbp." He was the executive producer of "Super Laff-In," "Going Bananas," and "Abangan Ang Susunod Na Kabanata." Then, he became a TV director.

PEREZ. Veers away from formulas.

"I was working closely with directors. I stayed with them during tapings, editing and dubbing. Eventually, I found myself wanting the challenges they faced," he shares.

Jumping from different genres—drama,

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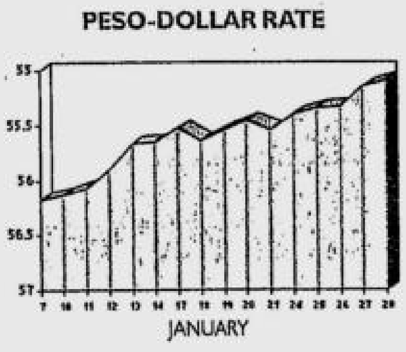
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P 55.09 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 28, 2005

¥ 103.19 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 28, 2005

GOLD: $ 427.50-428.00
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 27, 2005

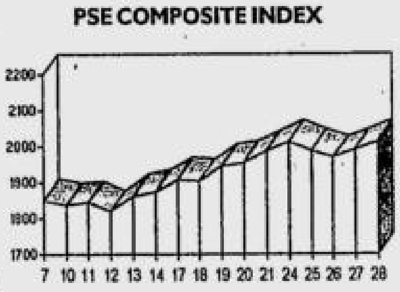
STOCK MARKET

Stocks up 1.17%

SHARE prices closed 1.17 percent higher yesterday, lifted by an extended technical rebound following the success of a huge government global bond issue, dealers said.

They said profit-taking set in before the close of trade and was expected to continue next week as most share prices were already at overbought levels.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 23.22 points to 2,014.61 after trading between 1,991.39 and 2,023.66.


PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(See stock market report on Page B2)

STOCKS/ B2

By Doris C. Dumlao

PAST-DUE credit card receivables of Philippine banks jumped by 50.9 percent to P14.03 billion at end-September 2004 from a year ago as aggressive lenders continued to grapple with a high incidence of defaults.

In a report released yesterday, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said the combined past-due exposure of universal, commercial and thrift banks also surged to 22.5 percent as a ratio of total "plastic" receivables in September from 18 percent a year ago.

Bankers often cited the high risk of credit card defaults in the country as the major reason why interest rates charged on this unsecured consumer lending were similarly high, hitting more than 3 percent a month.

Compared to the previous quarter, however, the end-September past due receivables inched up by only 0.3 percent while the past-due ratio even improved from 23.5 percent at end-June as the growth in credit card receivables surpassed the growth of past due receivables.

As a ratio of the banking system's non-performing loans, the past-due credit card receivables stood at 4.8 percent, the same level a quarter ago but up from 3.2 percent a year ago.

On the other hand, the ratio of past-due credit card receivables to total loan portfolio settled at 0.8 percent versus 0.6 percent a year ago.

The total credit card receivables of the banking system inclusive of credit card subsidiaries of the banking industry amounted to P62.5 billion at end-September, up by 20.6 percent from a year ago.

Universal and commercial banks accounted for 69.3 percent of the total receivables, of which majority was held by foreign banks at P31.2 billion or 49.9 percent while local lenders held only P12.1 billion or 19.4 percent.

The Philippines is vulnerable to a credit card crisis amid consumers' skyrocketing household bills and over-aggressive expansion by credit card issuers, Asia United Bank president Abraham Co warned.

Co said credit card companies, facing cutthroat competition, were being forced to be more aggressive in increasing their client base. Even as more newcomers were being lured into investing huge sums of money to build the infrastructure for the credit card business, Co said these issuers end up merely eating up one another's client base as the market was not growing fast.

Credit card penetration rate in the Philippines is about 30 percent of the population, according to industry estimates. There are about four million credit cards issued in the country and about two million cardholders, as each eligible borrower owns an average of two "plastics."

While generous credit lines were encouraging consumers to spend more, Co said delinquency might further rise once household bills shoot up.

Meanwhile, banks' auto lending appeared less problematic based on a separate BSP report released yesterday.

No-audit plan seen luring 100,000 taxpayers

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue said the government's No-Audit Program was expected to attract at least 100,000 tax delinquents to voluntarily raise their tax remittance by 20 percent, therefore boosting the administration's chances of achieving its P547-billion revenue-collection goal for this year.

The no-audit program, as stated under the recently issued EO 399 and which will run for five years, requires the Bureau of Internal Revenue to spare from audit taxpayers who will voluntarily raise their tax remittance in the covered year by 20 percent from that of the previous year.

The objective of the program is to raise the BIR's collection by enticing taxpayers, especially those whose accuracy of tax remittances is doubtful, to voluntarily increase their tax payments.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said in a press briefing yesterday that the revenue agency expected to gather a substantial amount of additional revenue from the no-audit program, considering the positive outcome of a similar program that it previously implemented.

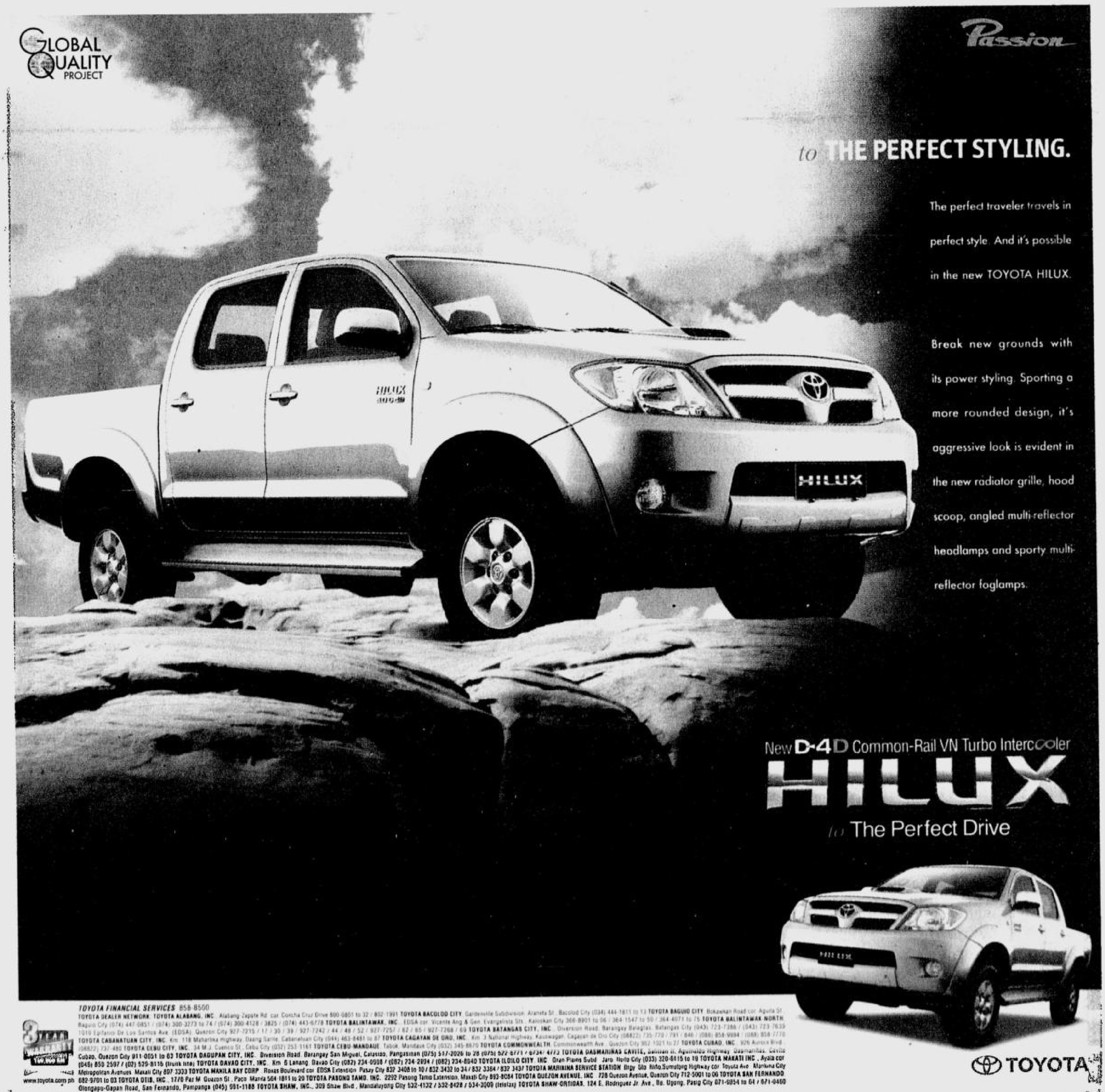
The commissioner said that under the BIR's Last Priority in Audit Program in 2003, the BIR grew its collection by P15.46 billion or by 28 percent. He said that 24,146 individual taxpayers and 13,893 non-individuals voluntarily raised their tax remittance by 20 percent.

Under the Last Priority in Audit Program, those who voluntarily raised their tax remittances by 20 percent were promised to be audited the last by the BIR.

"That was only a last priority in audit. Now, with the no-audit program, we expect a conservative number of 100,000 participants," Parayno said.

While the No-Audit Program is

NO-AUDIT/ B2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Hopewell hits termination of SLEX joint-venture deal

By Clarissa S. Batino

HOPEWELL Crown Infrastructure Inc. yesterday said Philippine National Construction Corp. had no legal basis to "unilaterally" terminate their joint-venture agreement on the P10-billion upgrade of the South Luzon Expressway.

Hopewell Crown president Joel Bañares said the private consortium was financially capable of undertaking the SLEX project, especially after Malaysia's MTD Capital Berhad agreed to own 67 percent of the company.

Hopewell Crown owns 80 percent of South Luzon Tollway Corp., a joint venture with PNCC put up to rehabilitate and eventually operate the SLEX tollway where about 200,000 motorists pass through daily

"We are trying to seek clarification from PNCC because it is contradicting its Aug. 13 board resolution as well as a Sept. 14 letter to President Arroyo," Bañares said in an interview.

He said an Aug. 13 PNCC board resolution noted that the agency's board of directors "has resolved that its existing joint venture partner has presented the necessary and sufficient documents to prove its financial capability, as well as its debt-sourcing capacity to undertake the rehabilitation and extension of the SLEX."

A Sept. 13 letter by PNCC chair and president Pastor Ramos to President Arroyo noted that "the PNCC board favorably endorsed the PNCC-HCII joint-venture agreement as still the best option."

Bañares, a former finance undersecretary, said Hopewell Crown was surprised to receive a memo from the PNCC dated Jan. 11 that the board was "reconfirming and reaffirming" the termination of the joint-venture agreement.

"We do not know what termination PNCC was reconfirming and reaffirming because based on the communication we had with them until this Jan. 11 memo, we have a joint-venture agreement. Our foreign partner was shocked how this could happen when we informed MTD Capital [of the Jan. 11 memorandum]," he said.

Bañares said his company even furnished PNCC with the latest financial results of MTD Capital, showing it had $400 million in capital and $520 million in assets.

The private consortium could not start the project without PNCC's go-ahead, which, according to Bañares, he had been trying to secure since the latter part of 2004.

As for the "color" of Hopewell Crown's money, its president said no investment nor credit would be clinched until the government had signed a Supplemental Toll Operation Agreement.

Shangri-La to build resort, spa in Boracay

SHANGRI-LA Hotels and Resorts, Asia-Pacific's leading luxury hotel group, said it would open a new spa resort in Boracay in mid-2007 to complement the group's existing four properties in the Philippines.

It said the beachfront resort on Boracay Island would be designed by Hawaii-based architect firm WATG, and the interior design would be headed by well-known Singapore-based designer Dan Bube, who is designing the group's Maldives resort. The resort would reflect a classic yet contemporary style combined with local cultural influences, the company added.

The resort will have 170 large guest rooms and 50 deluxe villas, with average floor space of 45 and 90 square meters, respectively, and feature ocean views from spacious balconies or porches. Villas will include outdoor plunge pool, shower, whirlpool, pergola for al fresco dining and day bed for relaxation or massage.

The resort's dining and entertainment options will include a poolside bar, lobby lounge, pub, all-day dining coffee shop with outdoor seating, and specialty restaurant located on a promontory offering 360 degree ocean views, with indoor and outdoor seating.

The company said that Shangri-La Resort and Spa Boracay will provide the largest meeting and banqueting facilities on the island, consisting of a 600-square-meter ballroom and 400 square meters of function rooms. An outdoor wedding pavilion with panoramic views will accommodate 50 persons for weddings or special events, it said.

The resort will feature a 1,350-square-meter CHI spa, Shangri-La's signature spa brand, with treatments based on Chinese and Himalayan healing concepts. Located on a rock peninsula in the ocean and overlooking a private bay, CHI will be a separate spa village complex designed as a sanctuary within the resort. The spa village facilities will include deluxe villas for half or full day use, and smaller suites for hourly treatments. A spa pool will be set within the landscaped garden.

In addition to CHI spa, Shangri-La said that recreational facilities such as outdoor tennis court, free form swimming pool, health club and marine center with diving facilities would also be available.

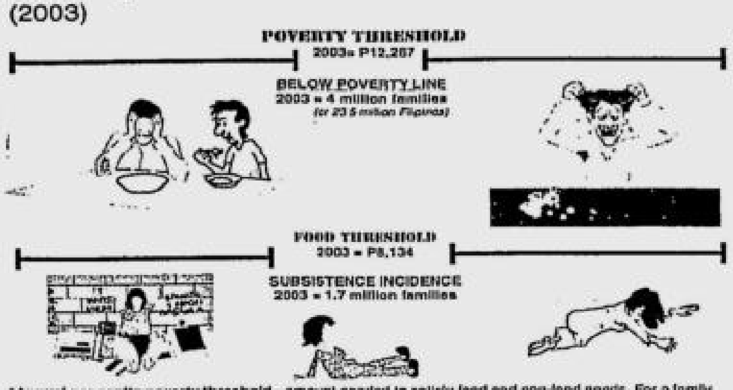
An hour flight south of Manila, Boracay is an ideal tropical vacation destination. The picturesque island has more than 30 beaches, foremost of which is the 4-km White Beach with pure white sand, which is widely considered to be among the world's best beaches.

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Poverty in RP*

(2003)



*Annual per capita poverty threshold - amount needed to satisfy food and non-food needs. For a family of 5 a monthly income of P5,111 should be earned to sustain their basic needs
Annual per capita food threshold - amount needed to provide for basic food requirements. For a family of 5, monthly income should be P3,389

Sources: National Statistical Coordination Board

AT 23.5 million Filipinos, over a quarter of the country's total population cannot afford life's basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Moreover, 1.7 million of the 4 million poor families do not earn enough to satisfy even their basic food needs. Highest incidence of poverty (in percent) were recorded in the regions of Caraga (54.2), ARMM (53.1) and Western Mindanao (49.4) while lowest were in NCR (7.3), Central Luzon (17.7) and Calabarzon (18.8).

Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

Stocks up 1.17%

From page B1

Volume was 5.48 billion shares worth P1.83 billion from 5.72 billion shares worth P1.19 billion on Thursday.

The broader all-shares index fell 4.77 points to 1,163.23.

Gainers beat losers 99 to 27, with 33 stocks unchanged.

"Recent economic reports and corporate news continue to overwhelm investors. The strong value turnover is proof of that renewed confidence in the Philippine economy," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings Inc.

"The recent global bond offering tells you a lot that despite the recent credit ratings downgrade, there remains... a strong appetite for Philippine debt paper," Del Castillo added.

The government successfully sold $1.5 billion worth of 25-year global bonds this week, despite a recent downgrade of the country's sovereign credit ratings by Standard and Poor's.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co (PLDT) was the most actively traded stock, but it closed down P10 at P1,430. *AFP*

MWSS takeover of west zone to cost $60M

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE GOVERNMENT-LED Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System will "officially but temporarily" take over the west concession from the Lopez Group and its French partner Suez Lyonnais des Eaux, but for a hefty price of $60 million.

This was indicated in the recommendations of designated court receiver, lawyer Rosario Bernaldo, in Maynilad Water Services Inc.'s final rehabilitation plan that is expected to be approved by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 90 on Monday.

In Annex "J" of the receiver's report, Suez will assign 13.7 million shares to MWSS amounting to $27 million and some $33 million will be paid for shares acquired from Benpres Holdings that will actually be held by the creditor-banks.

However, in the same report (page 23, paragraph 36), French partner Suez will actually be paid the $27 million upon the drawdown from the $120-million performance bond of Maynilad that has been obtained by the MWSS last week.

The receiver's report also indicated that the government will also use the performance bond to pay the private banks $33 million for the Benpres Holdings shares that they acquired. The payment will be in installment.

Non-government groups led by Bantay Tubig Network's Maitet Diokno-Pascual pointed out that the takeover would prove costly for the national government.

"Why is the government paying some $60 million for equity shares in a company that is insolvent. The receiver's computation would put the value of Maynilad's shares at more than P100 per share," Pascual said.

The rehabilitation plan further indicated that Maynilad's assets were now estimated at P1.2 billion, while its liabilities stood at P18 billion.

MWSS Deputy Administrator Macra Cruz yesterday admitted in a forum that although the recommendations of Bernaldo were expected to be approved by the Quezon City RTC Branch 90, MWSS was now preparing for an eventual takeover of the west zone operations.

VICTORIAS
MILLING COMPANY, INC.

NOTICE
OF POSTPONEMENT OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

To All Stockholders:

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual Stockholders' Meeting** of **Victorias Milling Company, Inc.** previously scheduled on **1 March 2005**, has been postponed by the Board of Directors to **1 April 2005 at 9:00 in the morning.**

Formal notice and agenda for the meeting shall be published later.

(Sgd.) SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.
Corporate Secretary

No-audit . . .

From page B1

expected to gain patronage among corporate taxpayers, he said the BIR would aggressively promote this among individual taxpayers, especially those who are self-employed. The BIR said it believed that the sector covering self-employed individuals was a source of tax leakages, and that many of them could be encouraged to apply for the program.

He noted that the BIR collected an average of P84 billion from salaried individuals, and only P3 billion from the self-employed. He added that with the BIR's text promo, wherein taxpayers where encouraged to text the numbers of the receipts they got from any purchase of goods or services, the revenue agency was able to detect discrepancies between the actual amount of tax remittance by doctors and the amount of gross receipts sent through text by their patients.

The BIR is now investigating a number of doctors after the detection of the discrepancies, he said.

Parayno clarified that under the No-Audit program, the BIR would only exempt from audit the tax payments of registered taxpayers for the covered taxable year. This means the BIR is not prevented from auditing tax payments in the years prior to the covered one.

The No-Audit program is one of the administrative measures undertaken by the Arroyo administration to increase the government's weak revenues. EO 399 was issued while the legislative proposal of a Tax Amnesty is still pending in Congress.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 28, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.5	5.2	4.5	5	231,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30	31.5	29.5	31.5	2,050,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57	58.5	56.5	58	906,200
China Banking Corp.	570	570	570	570	1,240
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	1,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46.5	46.5	45	45	234,100
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.46	3,870,000
International Exch. Bank	18.25	18.75	18.25	18.75	448,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	30.5	31.5	30	31.5	2,084,000
Prudential Bank	350	350	350	350	280
Philippine National Bank	27.5	28.5	27.5	28.5	120,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	15	14.5	15	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	30	31	30	30.5	184,100
Union Bank Of the Phil.	28	29.5	28	29.5	107,400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2350	2350	2350	2350	30
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2	2	2	589,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	130	130	130	130	5,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1765	1765	1765	1765	630
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.25	46,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.84	1.86	1.78	1.78	16,288,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	950	950	930	935	36,420
Ipeople Inc.	4.5	4.9	4.5	4.8	1,037,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.049	0.05	0.049	0.05	5,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.036	0.037	4,400,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	10,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.28	2.28	2.28	2.28	50,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	4	4.1	4	4	18,744,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1445	1455	1430	1430	158,630
Ivantage Corp.	0.66	0.7	0.66	0.7	2,650,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	114,100,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17	17.5	17	17.25	120,600
Manila Electric Co. B	25.5	27.5	25.5	27.5	1,497,500
Petron Corp.	3.85	4.1	3.85	4.1	6,834,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.66	1.82	1.6	1.8	19,263,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.68	1.78	1.68	1.7	2,864,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.3	1,088,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	190,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	5,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.45	0.47	0.45	0.47	2,590,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	110,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.2	4.45	4.2	4.35	15,983,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	4	4.5	4	4.5	2,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.34	1.48	1.34	1.48	107,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	130,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.2	55,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30.5	30	30.5	207,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27.5	27.5	27	27	546,500
RFM Corp.	0.74	0.82	0.74	0.82	270,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	290,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57.5	58	87,000
San Miguel Corp. B	77.5	77.5	77.5	77.5	6,800
Universal Robina Corp.	9.8	10	9.8	9.9	267,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	1,600,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	14	14	13.25	13.25	9,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.009	323,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0085	0.0095	0.0085	0.0095	24,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.8	7.9	7.6	7.7	14,874,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.57	0.76	0.57	0.74	3,850,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	2,040,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	500
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.03	0.032	0.03	0.032	44,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.92	1.94	1.9	1.92	288,000
APC Group Inc.	0.23	0.3	0.23	0.3	21,580,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	889,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.45	0.47	0.45	0.47	70,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.16	1.16	6,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.24	1.3	1.24	1.3	45,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.5	21.75	21.25	21.75	60,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.16	0.13	0.15	1,970,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.04	1.14	1.04	1.08	93,140,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	250,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.25	0.27	0.24	0.26	9,850,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.24	0.28	0.24	0.25	6,610,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.36	0.47	0.36	0.45	52,680,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	5.5	5.7	5.3	5.5	16,820,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.039	0.039	0.037	0.037	19,100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.16	1.16	304,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	8.9	9.1	8.9	9.1	2,025,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	37.5	39	37.5	39	3,132,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	750,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.0825	0.0725	0.0825	22,500,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.48	1.54	1.4	1.46	9,625,000
Ionics Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.58	1.58	220,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.3	848,000
Keppel Holdings	0.98	1.02	0.98	1.02	50,000
Keppel Holdings B	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.5	2.65	2.48	2.5	3,238,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	500,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.38	1.44	1.38	1.42	9,187,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	20,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.49	0.51	0.49	0.51	61,950,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.17	0.2	0.17	0.2	650,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.2	1.26	1.2	1.26	341,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.15	0.15	870,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	400,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.58	0.62	0.58	0.62	200,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	20,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.155	0.16	0.15	0.16	3,150,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.17	0.17	2,130,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1,360,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	2.85	2.9	2.85	2.9	17,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.66	1.76	1.66	1.68	146,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	20,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.07	0.0775	0.07	0.075	16,800,000
Pryce Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	10,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.65	0.69	0.64	0.67	17,750,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.12	1.08	1.1	2,990,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.58	0.58	480,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	65,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.33	0.36	0.33	0.36	5,520,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	18	18.25	18	18	395,600
ATS Corp. - Preferred	3	3	3	3	2,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8.6	9.1	8.6	9.1	12,047,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	30,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	20,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.32	8,120,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.145	0.15	0.145	0.15	1,500,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	340,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.4	0.43	0.4	0.41	38,160,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.36	1.44	1.36	1.42	12,328,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	20,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.205	0.215	0.2	0.21	4,360,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.67	0.71	0.67	0.7	2,460,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	500,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	118,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.215	0.225	0.215	0.22	1,670,000
SM Development Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.42	1.42	823,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.4	8.6	8.4	8.6	8,690,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.8	0.95	0.8	0.95	910,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.8	1.06	0.8	1.06	740,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.015	229,900,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.1	8.2	7.8	7.9	1,394,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.7	10.5	7.5	10.25	84,000
Benguet Corp. B	9	9	9	9	1,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.5	3.9	3.5	3.85	110,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	32,810,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.54	0.55	0.52	0.52	53,850,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	534,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.036	0.038	0.034	0.035	1,232,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	237,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.42	1.42	1.34	1.34	12,017,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.78	1.8	1.66	1.68	20,361,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.41	0.46	0.41	0.46	1,880,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	102,000,000
Interport Res.	0.006	0.0075	0.006	0.0065	111,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0065	0.0075	0.0065	0.0075	69,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	513,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0095	0.009	0.009	232,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.5	0.53	0.49	0.5	1,580,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.52	0.54	0.5	0.54	980,000
Pacifica	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.013	13,900,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.15	3.3	3.15	3.25	328,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.085	0.12	0.085	0.12	68,300,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.41	0.44	0.41	0.43	850,000

CURRENCIES

January 28, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.766930	1.000000	55.1880
Japan	Yen	0.007438	0.009698	0.5352
United Kingdom	Pound	1.447887	1.887900	104.1894
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098343	0.128230	7.0768
Switzerland	Franc	0.647363	0.844096	46.5840
Canada	Dollar	0.619692	0.808016	44.5928
Singapore	Dollar	0.469904	0.612708	33.8141
Australia	Dollar	0.594612	0.775314	42.7880
Bahrain	Dinar	2.034405	2.652661	146.3951
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204510	0.266660	14.7164
Brunei	Dollar	0.468468	0.610836	33.7108
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019937	0.025996	1.4347
UAE	Dirham	0.208836	0.272301	15.0277
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.303900	71.9596
Argentina	Peso	0.262423	0.342173	18.8838
Brazil	Real	0.287994	0.375516	20.7240
Denmark	Kroner	0.134370	0.175205	9.6692
India	Rupee	0.017570	0.022910	1.2644
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201851	0.263193	14.5251
Mexico	New Peso	0.067957	0.088609	4.8902
New Zealand	Dollar	0.548669	0.715410	39.4820
Norway	Kroner	0.121175	0.158000	8.7197
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012994	0.016943	0.9351
South Africa	Rand	0.129330	0.168634	9.3066
Korea	Won	0.000746	0.000973	0.0537
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024026	0.031328	1.7289

POLICY STATEMENT

Purisima wants more changes in tax structure

By Michelle V. Remo

INCOMING Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima has called for further reforms in the Philippine tax structure and improvement in tax administration to weather the country's debilitating fiscal problems.

In his first policy statement on his fiscal plans after being appointed to Department of Finance, Purisima said increasing the value-added tax rate from 10-12 percent was necessary for government to raise revenue.

"Taxation is not popular and I am not in love with the VAT, but it is necessary," he said before members of the Makati Business Club during its general assembly yesterday.

Purisima said the DOF was looking at increasing the government's revenue collection to 16 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product from the current 13.5 percent, or by 2.5 percentage points.

The country's revenue-to-GDP ratio is currently one of the lowest in the region, he said.

"Our tax revenue in the past five years has not been buoyant, (meaning) it is not increasing as fast as the GDP. We need to review why this is happening," he said.

He said the recently approved measures such as the passage of the sin taxes law, the 98 centavo-per-kilowatt-hour increase in electricity rates, and the increase in petroleum duties would contribute a one-percentage point increase in revenue-to-GDP ratio. An incremental 1.2 percentage point will come from the pending proposals of a VAT hike, lifting of tax exemptions and an additional 40-centavo increase in electricity rates.

"The remaining [amount] will have to be achieved through the increase in fees and charges (by government agencies) and improvement in the efficiency in tax collection," he said.

Earlier, the Departments of Finance and Budget and Management directed line agencies to increase their fees and charges.

Aside from additional taxes, Purisima said, improving the collection of existing taxes was equally needed to achieve the government's goal of wiping out its deficit and easing its debts.

He said one way to detect tax delinquency, and therefore improve collection efficiency, is to set benchmarks for the tax liabilities per type of taxpayer and per activity.

If the tax remittance is lower than the benchmark, then the Bureau of Internal Revenue could investigate.

"We'll predict how much you have to pay. We will make use of statistics to know what is your due," he said.

Purisima said the DOF will also target to reduce the government's debt-to-GDP ratio, which currently stands at 118 percent, to only 76 percent.

He said reducing the debt was necessary to maintain the government's access to the international credit market.

DA bans imports of Canadian beef products

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture banned imports of beef products from Canada after new cases of Bovine Spongiform Encelopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease were reported.

The country imports an average of 2,000 metric tons of beef from Canada every year, a small volume compared to the imports from United States, Australia and Brazil.

The ban, provided under Memorandum Order No.1, Series of 2005 of the DA-Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), covers the importation of live cattle, sheep and goats and their meat and meat products; bovine embryo; meat and bone meal and other feed ingredients derived from these animals from Canada.

"There is growing concern and increasing scientific evidence that the new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans could probably be transmitted by eating BSE-affected animals. We could not afford the risk," BAI Director Jose Q. Molina said in a forum hosted by the Philippine Agricultural Journalists Inc.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency on Jan. 11 said the brain wasting disease showed up in an Alberta, Canada cow under seven years old, which can afflict people when eaten.

Any shipment into the country would be stopped and confiscated by veterinary quarantine officials at all major sea and airports, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap stated in his memorandum.

The Philippines previously allowed the importation of meat products from Canada, particularly beef that comes from cows aged 30 months and younger. This has now been stopped.

Similar import bans have earlier been imposed on countries like United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland, Portugal, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Spain for fears of transmitting the disease to humans.

A study by the Department of Health, however, noted that there are no verified reports of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in the country, which takes 10 to 30 years before signs and symptoms appear following exposure to mad cow disease.

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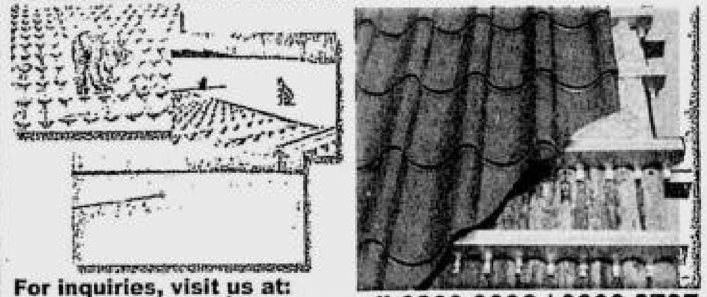

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Araneta firm files complaint vs ATRKE

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE LBC Group of the Araneta family has lodged a complaint against its trust fund manager, ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc., over the alleged release of P83.2 million from the trust funds of preneed firm TPG Corporation.

The LBC Group of businessman Carlos Araneta owns 50 percent of Professional Mutual Holdings Inc. through holding firm LBC Development Corp.

PMHI in turn owns 80 percent of TPG. Araneta is also a TPG board director.

In the complaint filed with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the LBC Group claimed that ATRKE, "in bad faith, withdrew the amount of P83,201,968.00 from TPG's trust funds and utilized the same for the purchase of GE Life shares of stock," according to Ronaldo Tugonon, LBC Group legal counsel.

But ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners, an investment house with BSP authority to act as trustee of a portion of the TPG trust fund, described the move of the LBC Group as "pure harassment."

The LBC Group asked the BSP to investigate alleged violations of trust fund investments, serious breach of fiduciary relationship and gross mismanagement of trust funds by ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners.

It also asked the BSP to impose sanctions on ATRKE and cancel its trust authority.

Tugonon on Jan 18 wrote BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura that ATRKE had undertaken the purchase "without the knowledge, consent and authority of (the) TPG Board and contrary to the explicit terms and manner by which the 22 percent shareholdings in GE Life shall be purchased."

LBC said the unauthorized act of ATRKE had depleted the trust fund by P83 million which could have been used for other investments or purposes for the benefit of TPG planholders.

But ATRKE officials dismissed the LBC Group's charges as "spurious."

"Offhand we would view this as pure harassment in connection with our P353 million claim against Mr. Carlos Araneta and LBC Development Corp., and the case filed against them in the United States," ATRKE said. "We wouldn't be surprised if other trumped up charges are brought before other regulatory bodies."

According to ATRKE, it has always complied with government regulations and that its trust department has passed the biannual BSP audit conducted on its trust operations.

The investment house also said it would welcome the BSP probe.

ATRKE said the BSP had not officially advised the trust fund manager regarding the LBC complaint.

'Ukay-ukay' seen losing sales to brand-new items

DAVAO CITY—*Ukay-ukay* will starting losing its appeal starting this year because of the phase-out of quota for garments, according to Joji Bian, vice chair of the East Asean Business Council (EABC).

Joji Bian, vice chair of EABC, said the phase out of the garments and textile quota will open the market to cheap goods from China, giving Filipinos access to brand new and cheaper goods.

"*Ukay ukay* will finally lose its appeal," Bian said. "People can buy much cheaper branded new clothes."

The Philippines is a signatory to the 1994 World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, which mandated the phasing out of the garments and textile quota this year.

Some sectors feared that opening up the textile and garments market will kill the domestic garments industry, rendering thousands of workers jobless.

China, which currently corners 15 per cent of the US market for garments, is lording it over the market because of its cheap, non-unionized labor, its modern textile mills.

These allow Chinese factories to produce cheaper, high quality garments at a fast rate.

After 30 years of its assured garments quota, the Philippines is feared to lose its share of the $400-billion market.

But supporters of the phase out said it would be to the advantage of consumers.

"The name of the game now will be free trade, which will give local consumers access to cheaper goods," Bian agreed. *Germelina A. Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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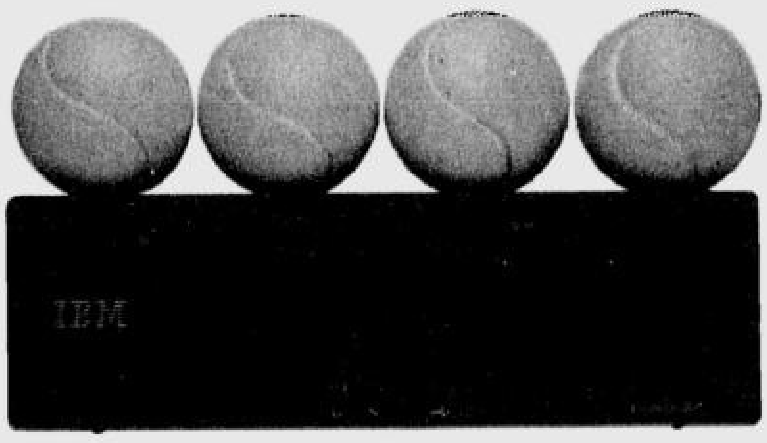

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Nurses urged: Bring back passion in profession

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE COUNTRY'S 17,000 government nurses are being urged to rekindle the passion for caring amid the growing desire for money associated with their profession.

During its 43rd convention this week, the National League of Philippine Government Nurses reiterated the need for nurses to go back to the noble reasons for nursing practice: compassion and caring.

NLPGN president Frances Prescilla Cuevas said the emergence of nursing as a very lucrative profession has taken its toll on the quality of service of the country's nurses.

"Bringing back the passion for nursing is very important because the passion for money could overshadow the passion for nursing," Cuevas said in an interview. "So we're saying: 'Be good, bring back the heart to nursing.' That's what's important to us now."

"We want to show that the nursing profession still believes in the basic tenet of human care," she added.

No covenant

But the government nurses would not follow the footsteps of some 6,000 doctors who have pledged to practice in the country for three years before working abroad.

The NLPGN is convinced that the country's government nurses have the right to choose their career path especially given the low compensation for nurses here.

"We don't want to do what the doctors did; we won't come up with a covenant. Everybody is free to do whatever they want," Cuevas said.

"All we want is for them to realize that they are in nursing because of their passion for nursing. It doesn't matter where they work, whether here in the Philippines or abroad," she said.

The Philippines has been identified as the top supplier of nurses in the world and the third top exporter of doctors. Its own health care system has been suffering from the exodus of health workers to developing countries.

The demand for nurses abroad has also led to a tripling in the number of nursing schools in the Philippines that produce thousands of graduates every year, less than half of whom pass the board exam.

Cuevas said many nursing students and graduates decided to enter the field because of opportunities to earn dollars abroad. Few stay in the country to care for fellow Filipinos.

She said that based on observations, the turnover rate of nurses in state hospitals ranges from 40 to 60 percent annually. She, however, admitted that this has yet to be supported by scientific studies.

Implement the law

Cuevas said the implementation of Republic Act 9173, or the Nursing Act of 2002, could help regulate the exodus because it provides for an increase in the entry level salary of government nurses from P9,000 to P13,000.

"The additional income from the implementation of the law would be enough to make them have second thoughts about leaving. It's still an additional P4,000, which could mean a lot," Cuevas said.

"We hope that after three years of waiting, the government would give us what is ours. Implement the law," said Philippine Nurses Association president Ruth Padilla.

The increase provided by law would require around P500 million, which the national and local governments have yet to source.

Health Undersecretary Margarita Galon said the Department of Health has also been lobbying for funds to give the higher wages.

"It's very important [to implement the law], especially because our nurses are being offered big, big salaries abroad, which we cannot match even half of," Galon said.

She said it was the nurses' dedication that would not let them "abandon" the country.

"So we should give them better compensation, and that's not just salary but also recognition, awards and educational benefits," Galon said.

Sleep more to weigh less?

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

HOW many times have you heard someone say that s/he's lost weight because s/he hasn't been getting a lot of sleep?

Now researchers from Stanford University and the University of Chicago have released studies suggesting that chronic sleep deprivation actually leads to higher body mass indices (BMIs).

First up, psychiatrist Emmanuel Mignot and his colleagues at Stanford. Their paper appeared in the Dec. 7 issue of the open-access journal PloS Medicine. They collaborated with researchers from the University of Wisconsin to look for the relationship between sleep and weight.

They used data collected by the Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study from the Wisconsin campus starting in 1989 wherein state employees between 30 and 60 were given questionnaires every five years. The respondents were asked to fill in diaries about their sleeping habits, as well as lifestyles and general health.

Mignot et al.'s study involves the 1,024 participants of the Wisconsin study who not only answered the surveys but went on to take part in an overnight sleep study at the university and donating a blood sample prior to eating the morning after.

Less than 7.7 hours sleep

In general, the researchers found that those who had the least amount of sleep had the highest BMIs.

They also linked lack of sleep to hormonal changes, finding that those who slept 5-6 hours a night had an average of 15 percent more ghrelin, and 15 percent less leptin in their bodies.

Leptin is a protein hormone that suppresses appetite while ghrelin is a hormone that stimulates appetite.

Mignot et al.'s conclusions? That habitual sleep duration below 7.7 hours was associated with increased BMI. They also found that sleep affects the hormonal balance of leptin and ghrelin in the body.

Similar conclusions

Despite differences in test methods, sleep researcher Eve Van Cauter and her colleagues at the University of Chicago come to similar conclusions in their study, which appears in the Dec. 7 issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine.

They worked with 12 male participants in their early 20s who usually slept 7-9 hours a night to determine, if possible, a relationship between sleep and weight gain.

The respondents were asked to participate in one of two sleepover sessions as part of the study. For a week prior to each sleepover, they were asked not to take naps during the day, and to be in bed from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. each day.

Half of the men were asked to participate in a sleep extension study where they had to stay in bed from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. for two consecutive nights. The other six participated in a sleep reduction study and had to stay in bed from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. for two consecutive nights.

They were provided dinners but were asked not to deviate from their usual eating habits during the day as they went about their normal routines. Every hour between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on these days, the participants also answered questions about how hungry they felt and what they felt like eating at the moment from a list of several food groups.

After six weeks, those who had done the sleep reduction study did the sleep extension study and vice versa.

8 hours sleep

The researchers studied the blood samples taken from the participants and found that compared to the results for the sleep extension study, when participants spent just four hours in bed, their leptin levels were 18 percent lower, and their ghrelin levels were 26 percent higher. The men also reported being 24 percent hungrier with just a few hours sleep, and craved 33-45 percent more high carbohydrate foods.

The researchers' conclusions based on these results? That lack of sleep makes people feel hungrier, which makes them overeat, and therefore overweight.

Based on these two studies, one could assume that people should sleep eight or more hours each night to be thinner. One could even carry this notion to extremes and suggest that everyone should go through life asleep, with I.V. needles feeding us just enough nutrients to keep us alive so we could have acceptable BMIs.

But a life spent sleeping isn't much of a life, without access to all the shows, food and human interactions that make life worth living.

Medical experts note that rather than having more sleep as the ultimate weight-loss program, people should consider it part of a regimen to help keep oneself fit and healthy. In other words, work well, play well and then make sure to sleep well.

Christmas puzzle winners and solutions

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

MORE than 200 readers e-mailed their solutions to the puzzles featured on Christmas Day, proving that many Filipinos love challenging themselves.

Congratulations to the six readers who got everything right: Martin Valdes [lasengnomad@yahoo.com], Ivan Quentin [try1cmor@yahoo.com], Art Valencia [avatar@info.com.ph], Ryan S. Liwanag [rsliwanag@tri-isys.com], Carla Omaga [carlaomaga@yahoo.com], and Arnel Amparo [ajamparo@yahoo.com].

Eleven readers got four out of five questions: Val Choa [vanienc@gmail.com], Aleli R. Martin [juanita-ra@yahoo.com], Ryan C. Franco [ryan.franco@gmail.com], Korina Ada D. Tanyu [freeverse_99@yahoo.com], Shantrel S. Ballesteros [hyperfoe55@yahoo.com]. Donnie Ray Baje [donumvex@yahoo.com], Gerardo Banzon [gibanzon@yahoo.com], Gerard Gumban [bod_ph@yahoo.com], Lawrence Mamaril [lwrnzm@yahoo.com], Allendy Tan [allendy@mozcom.com], and Carissa Caparas [cosecant360@yahoo.com].

Seven readers got three points: Arben Visenio [arbenvisenio@gmail.com], Janilyn Dy [janilyn_dy@yahoo.com], Yar Min That [yarminthat@gmail.com], Andy L. Soco [aggie@edsamail.com.ph], Doren Flora [dorenflora@yahoo.com], Ignicris Alera [hopiaman01@yahoo.com], Ian Gelito [ian_gelito@yahoo.com].

One book

Four readers got two points: Jayson Dy [jaydy222@yahoo.com], Tagorio [brtag2003@yahoo.com], Alaric [alaricxyz@yahoo.com], and Angela Austria [shemacks@yahoo.com].

More than 100 readers got one question right. Congratulations!

Originally I had wanted to award an autographed copy of one of my two recent books, "How Do You Beat the Age Game?" and "Do You Speak Computerese?" (Anvil, 2004), only to the first five readers who got everything right, but answers streamed into my inbox, often only seconds apart. So I decided to give a book to all readers who got five or four correct solutions. Hopefully, this will encourage more Filipinos to develop their reasoning, logical and problem-solving skills.

Apartment building

Here are the questions and solutions, from the top readers themselves.

1. There are eight floors in this apartment. The fifth floor has the only suite with two bedrooms.

Mrs. Belen has a baby and cannot carry the stroller upstairs when the elevator is out of order. Mr. and Mrs. Engracio find climbing difficult, since they are retired. Mr. Ang likes the peaceful living on the top floor.

Mrs. Carmen and her daughter need two bedrooms. Mr. and Mrs. Hesus live just below Mr. Ang. Mrs. Carmen lives above Mr. Guzman and below Mrs. Dy. Mr. and Mrs. Feliz live above Mr. and Mrs. Engracio. Who lives where?

Arnel Amparo explains: Mr. and Mrs. Engracio live on the second floor, as they have difficulty climbing the stairs. Mr. Ang lives on the top or eighth floor. Mrs. Carmen and her daughter, who need two bedrooms, live on the fifth floor, which has the only suite with two bedrooms, and presumably the rest of the tenants need only one room.

Mr. and Mrs. Hesus live on the seventh floor, which is just below Mr. Ang's. Mr. Guzman lives on the fourth floor, which is below Mrs.Carmen's. Mrs Dy lives on the fifth floor, which is above Mrs. Carmen's. Mr. and Mrs. Feliz live on the third floor, which is is above Mr. and Mrs. Engracio's. Mrs. Belen, because of her baby, lives on the first floor.

To summarize: first floor: Mrs. Belen and baby; second floor: Mr. and Mrs. Engracio; third floor: Mr. and Mrs. Feliz; fourth floor: Mr. Guzman; fifth floor: Mrs. Carmen and daughter; sixth floor: Mrs. Dy; seventh floor: Mr. and Mrs. Hesus; eighth floor: Mr. Ang.

(Next week: answers to the other questions.)

AIDS vaccine enters second test stage

NEWARK, New Jersey—A potential HIV/AIDS vaccine developed by Merck & Co. that uses synthetic genes to prepare cells to fight the deadly virus is moving into the second stage of testing.

An approved vaccine would be about a decade away if the trial and a third study are successful, said officials with the international coalition that is collaborating on the work.

"It is the most promising candidate that we've seen so far," said Sarah B. Alexander, associate director of the coalition, known as the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, or HVTN.

She cautioned, however, "something better could come along tomorrow."

Volunteers began enrolling last month for the Phase 2 study, which will eventually give the potential vaccine's three doses to 1,500 people in North and South America, the Caribbean and Australia, HVTN and the New Jersey-based drug maker announced.

The study is using male and female volunteers aged 18 to 45 of diverse racial groups who are at high risk for contracting HIV. Participants will receive counseling about how to reduce their risk of HIV infection, Alexander said.

Phase 3

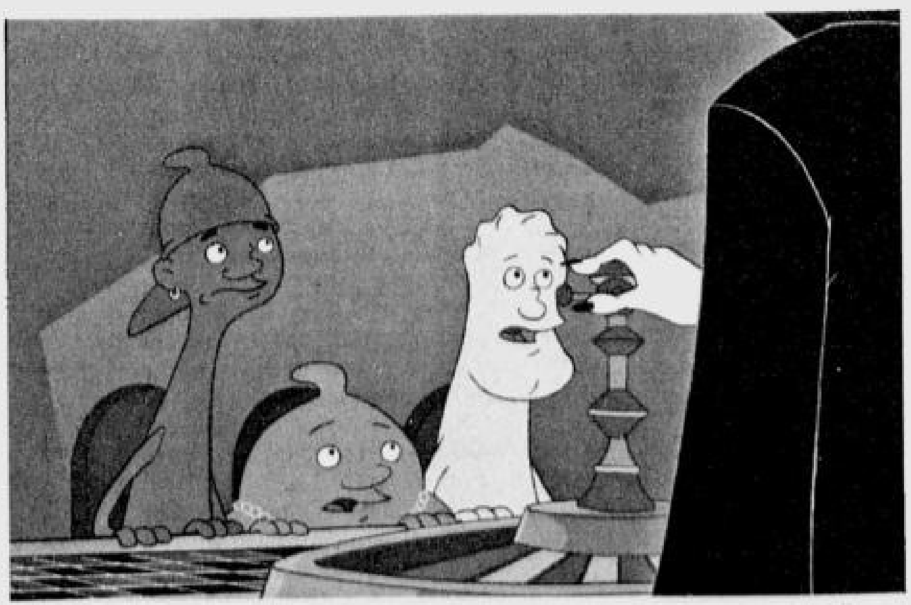
About a dozen companies and organizations worldwide are attempting to develop an AIDS vaccine. Of the 10 associated with HVTN, the Merck candidate is the first to reach Phase 2 testing, Alexander said.

Of the two that reached Phase 3, the final stage before certification is sought, one was deemed unsuccessful in 2000, and another, led by the US Department of Defense, is enrolling volunteers, she said.

The Merck candidate—the MRKAd5 HIV-1 gag/pol/nef vaccine—is designed to persuade the defenders of each cell, called "killer T cells," to attack HIV when the virus enters the cell. Other vaccines generate an antibody response.

The potential vaccine uses the virus of a common cold, modified so it cannot reproduce or cause people to catch a cold, to transport three synthetically produced HIV genes to the cells.

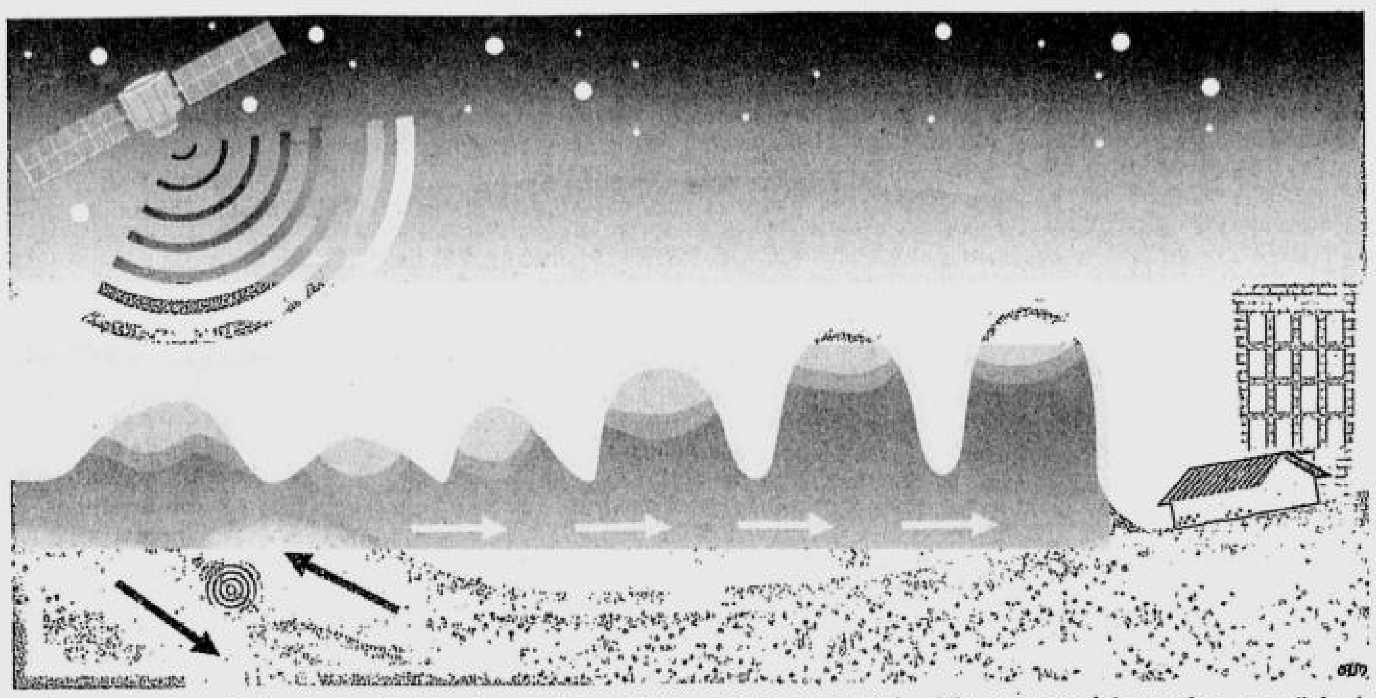
"We give the body enough of the virus so it can recognize it and create an immune response," but not enough to infect a person, Alexander said. *AP*



THE United Nations launched the "Three Amigos," an animated series of public service spots to promote the use of condoms to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. AP

THE GREAT WAVE

Behind the tragedy, a boon for scientists



PARIS—The Dec. 26 tsunami devastated lives around the Indian Ocean's coastline but, for science at least, there was a silver lining.

Satellite images, seismic sensors, even TV footage, photographs and eyewitness accounts have provided a gold mine of information, helping experts understand more about this force of nature and how to tackle it in the future.

The data will be of great use in preventing future disasters, said David Booth, senior seismologist at the British Geological Survey (BGS).

"It will help identify vulnerable areas, set up an alert system, and help build structures and breakwaters that deflect or slow down the wave before it reaches habitation," he said in an interview from Edinburgh, Scotland.

Every 30-40 years

Earthquakes of the Dec. 26 intensity, which measured nine on the Richter scale, occur on average only once every 30 or 40 years. Detailed evidence of the tsunamis they unleash is even sketchier.

But in this case, earthquake sensors and orbiting monitors have supplied a wealth of data as to how the event began.

And film, photos and the testimony of survivors have provided useful information about its climax, revealing beaches and building designs that were terribly at risk.

A mosaic of knowledge is now building up about the tsunami-prone fault, which lies off the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

400-km rupture

The earthquake "did not happen at a single point along the fault," said Booth.

"It actually ruptured over a length of at least 400 kilometers. The rupture started off the coast of Sumatra and propagated northward at around two kilometers per second.

"There was an upward movement of the seafloor, approximately northward. It only came up a few meters, but with all that water on top, there was a massive release of energy."

Satellite images

As good luck would have it, two hours after the murderous wave radiated out to the west, north and northeast, a pair of US-French satellites, Topex/Poseidon and Jason-1, happened to be passing overhead.

They took radar measurements of sea levels of the Bay of Bengal along a 3,000-kilometer stretch just as the tsunami's leading edge was reaching Sri Lanka and India, the British weekly New Scientist says.

What the orbiting scouts saw was unique: two waves of a maximum height of about 50 centimeters, traveling 500-800 km apart. In between were smaller ripples about 100-200 km apart.

These details—the first-ever observation of a propagating tsunami—give vital clues as to the amount of energy released and the way it travels, is forced to slow or change direction because of underwater mountains or slopes.

The 50-cm waves may have seemed tiny, but they represented the crest of a traveling body of water several thousand meters deep.

So when the wave collided with the continental shelf, this force began to build up, sending a towering wall of water into the coast.

Vulnerable areas

One tragic but useful outcome of the tsunami is that it instantly showed which areas are vulnerable to big waves.

By turning this data into computer models, scientists should be able to give quick and accurate advice when the planned Indian Ocean tsunami alert system gets under way next year.

The risk for any alert system is of losing credibility through false alarms.

By assessing the strength of a quake and the early direction of a tsunami, scientists can reduce such a risk by giving targeted warnings to those areas known to be exposed, rather than issuing a blanket alert to the whole region.

Another insight gained from the Dec. 26 tragedy is the effect of natural tsunami buffers, which on many coasts have been destroyed by the tourist industry or prawn farms.

"Coral reefs act as a natural breakwater and mangroves are a natural shock absorber, and this applies to floods and cyclones as well as tsunamis," said Simon Cripps, director of the Global Marine Program at the environment group WWF International. *AFP*

Are Filipinos failing the healthy lifestyle check?

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

A FEW days ago, a broadcast journalist asked me if our youth today are more health conscious. I had to pause for some time to make sure I gave an objective answer.

The health attitudes and practices of our youth can impact significantly on the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in the future. If we go by recent trends worldwide, the incidence of cardiovascular disease is still on the rise despite efforts to raise public awareness on the various risk factors leading to heart diseases and other atherosclerotic problems.

Even the most optimistic health experts are not too happy with their forecast that 10 years from now, the number of people dying of a heart attack and stroke annually would be equivalent to the deaths of 50 tsunamis of the same magnitude several Asian nations just experienced recently.

Modern lifestyle

Blame it on modern lifestyle, add to that the advertising for unhealthy substances such as cigarettes and liquor, and the net result is inconsistent health behavior and practice.

I think that although most of our youth may appear to be health conscious—going to the gym regularly or seeing to it that they get regular exercise and are in good form—many still smoke, drink too much, and go on "gimmicks" with abandon. This makes their going to the gym to shape their abs and calves a superficial, if not artificial, health habit intended perhaps more for cosmetic, rather than health purposes.

Nutrition survey

A lot of people are interested to find out the results of the National Nutrition and Health Survey (NNHeS), a nationwide survey to assess the prevalence of lifestyle- and nutrition-related risk factors and diseases among Filipinos 20 years and above. This is the highlight of the 10th Joint Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Hypertension (PSH) and the Philippine Lipid Society (PLS) which will be held from Feb. 2-4 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, Mandaluyong City.

This project is the product of a joint public and private sector initiative, and is the first nationwide survey and correlation study on lifestyle habits, risk factors and lifestyle diseases in the Philippines. It's interesting to find out the lifestyle practices of the average Filipino, and which segment of the population is more health conscious.

The NNHeS was spearheaded by the PSH, PLS, Philippine Diabetes Association, Philippine Heart Association, Department of Health and the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology. Ten major medical organizations supported this undertaking.

The NNHeS is a sequel to the 1998 survey on cardiovascular risk factors conducted by the PSH, PLS, PDA and the DOH that showed an increasing prevalence of lifestyle diseases in the country.

The congress will devote the whole morning of Feb. 3 for the presentation of the NNHeS results. The main authors will present the results of the "Prevalence of Lifestyle- and Nutrition-Related Cardiovascular Diseases and Risk Factors for Atherosclerosis among Adult Filipinos."

Obesity, smoking

Other topics are prevalence of obesity and behavioral risk factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity and food consumption, *bangungot*, stroke, dementia and other neurologic abnormalities, arthritis, gout, osteoporosis, kidney diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, asthma, allergic rhinitis and food allergy.

"The data should be of interest to all physicians and health workers in both the public and private sectors. The organizations that supported this survey will be pleased to have these data utilized by any individual or organization to promote health-seeking behaviors in the community," says Dr. Esperanza Cabral, PSH president.

She says the data can be used to formulate and implement appropriate intervention programs of the government and the private sector such as in lifestyle modification programs, nutrition labeling and healthy diet campaigns for the prevention and control of lifestyle and nutrition related risk factors and diseases.

Physicians and other health workers are invited to attend the congress. Journalists may also attend the NNHeS presentation and other lectures. For inquiries call 631-7970, 687-7073, 687-2841 or 0919-4260905.

New ADHD drug launched in RP

By Charles E. Buban

A NEW drug for treating attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has been licensed for use in the country, bringing with it the promise that the poorly understood psychiatric disorder in children may be treated more effectively and with fewer side effects.

Atomoxetine, marketed under the brand name Strattera, is the first medicine for ADHD that is not classified by the United States' Food and Drug Administration as a stimulant medication.

"This is the first medicine for ADHD that works through a mechanism different from the stimulant medicines used for decades," according to Eli Lilly (Philippines) Inc., the drug's local marketer.

Drug abuse

Since atomoxetine is not a stimulant, the drug is believed to be a less likely candidate for abuse.

Until the launch of atomoxetine, only the methylphenidate and amphetamine mixed salts class of drugs have been available to treat ADHD, which according to some doctors could lead to depression or be abused by drug users because of its amphetamine content.

"The safety and effectiveness of the drug was established in six trials involving over 4,000 children, adolescents and adults. In fact, over two million prescriptions for the drug have been filled since it was approved by the US FDA in 2002," said Strattera brand manager Janet Padilla-Yap.

Inhibitor

Atomoxetine is classified as a selective norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor.

According to literature from Eli Lilly, although it is not known precisely how the drug reduces ADHD symptoms, scientists believe it works by blocking or slowing reabsorption of norepinephrine, a brain chemical considered important in regulating attention, impulsivity and activity levels.

This action keeps more norepinephrine at work in the tiny spaces between neurons in the brain.

Most previous medicines have targeted another neurotransmitter called dopamine, which just like norepinephrine, is believed to play a role in ADHD.

Eli Lilly said the medicine is taken once a day. It will be sold at P4,670 per box of 28 capsules.

Poorly understood

"ADHD is one of the poorly understood psychiatric disorders that begins in childhood," said Dr. Ma. Theresa Arranz-Lim, a developmental pediatrician with special interest on ADHD.

She said that if left untreated, ADHD could have significant negative consequences, and not just at school or work.

Children with ADHD have extreme difficulty sitting still, learning or concentrating.

"It also affects social and family situations since looking after these affected children can be exhausting for parents," she said.

Lim said drugs, including atomoxetine, should be indicated as an integral part of a total treatment program for ADHD that may include psychological, educational and social measures.

Said Lim: "There is no 'quick fix' for ADHD, but there are ways to successfully manage its symptoms. The treatment plan should be tailored to the patient's needs, which may include behavioral management and counseling, apart from medication."

ASK THE DENTIST
Paul R. De Castro, DMD

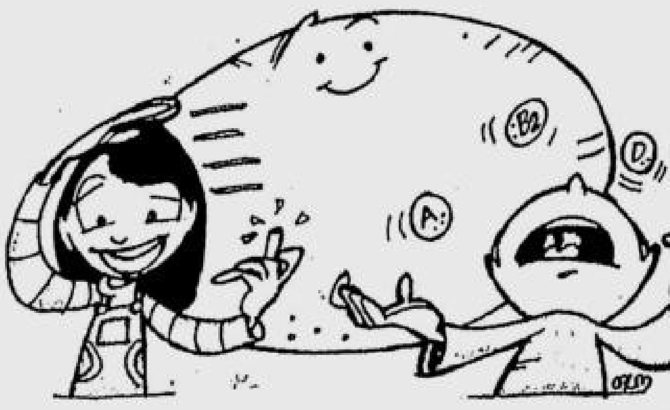
Spaced out teeth

MY 5-year-old has spaces between her front teeth. Her teeth looked better when she was younger. Should I worry about the position of her teeth? —Bea B.

You should not worry because the front teeth of your child are most likely baby teeth spacing out to be able to accommodate the larger permanent teeth that will erupt from age 6 to 11 years. The space also allows easier cleaning of the teeth and thus will be less susceptible to decay.

E-mail your questions at dentalqs@yahoo.com.

Egg still stands out for its healthy properties



WITH SEVERAL misconceptions about eggs (primarily on their rich cholesterol content), recent studies have shown that all the elements inherent in eggs far outweigh such fallacies.

For one, eggs are reasonably priced food sources that contain elements essential for body growth and development, particularly high-quality protein, vitamins A, B2, D and E and niacin, as well as the minerals copper, iron, sulphur, phosphorus and unsaturated fatty acids, among many others.

High-quality protein

The high-quality protein in eggs is an excellent aid for growing children, as they help balance the input and output of calories. Feeding egg yolks at 6 months of age provides a valuable source of iron for infants, while teenage girls who regularly eat eggs are less likely to develop breast cancer later in life.

The high protein in eggs can help people lose weight as they are low in calories, are nutrient-dense and create the feeling of being satiated, thus enabling people to "lose less muscle and more fat."

Energy booster

More than just an all-round food product that helps boost energy, eggs according to a report from the US Egg Nutrition Center, equally possess medicinal properties to aid even those with a wide array of health problems.

For one, the three substances contained in eggs—lumiflavin, lumchrome and sulphorophane—act as antioxidants, as these are capable of helping combat cancer-inducing viruses and prevent normal cells from turning into cancerous ones.

Specialty eggs

The proliferation of so-called specialty eggs have also been a boon to health, as these contain omega-3 fatty acids (to reduce hypertension), organic chromium (to minimize the risks of LDL cholesterol and blood sugar levels, as it improves insulin production).

They also contain vitamin E, organic selenium and other antioxidants that prevent oxidation, aging, formation of plaques in arteries, atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

Another good news that can boost the image of eggs as a safe, socially accepted product for vegetarians is the fact that the Indian systems of medicine (Ayuvedic and Siddhic) recognize eggs for their amazing healing properties, dating back thousands of years. When mixed with herbs, eggs do wonders in healing burns and fractures quickly.

Indeed, the health benefits of eggs are something to be rediscovered.

Free seminar

Those who want to better know this food product can attend a free seminar presented by the Food and Research Institute, National Nutrition Council.

The seminar is one of the major highlights of the 4th Philippine Egg Show slated on Feb. 11-13 at the Mega Trade Hall 2, SM Megamall, Ortigas Center. Robina Farms and Bounty Farms will also offer seminars on lighting programs in layer management and successful brooding management, respectively.

With the theme "Love that Egg," the egg show will showcase activities designed to enhance appreciation of health, economic and even artistic wonders of eggs like an egg-painting contest, egg cooking lessons, egg feeding, an egg photo contest, egg Olympics, eggstra challenge, a puppet show and a mall parade. Free chicks and free eggs will be given away.

P&G to buy Gillette in $57-B deal

CINCINNATI—Procter & Gamble Co. is buying razor and battery maker Gillette Co. for about $57 billion in a stock deal that would create the world's largest stable of consumer products, the companies announced yesterday.

If approved by regulators, the deal would combine such brands as Gillette's razors, Duracell batteries, and Oral B dental products with P&G's Tide detergent, Pampers, and Pantene hair products.

The boards of both companies approved the deal on Thursday.

The transaction calls for P&G to pay about 0.975 of its shares for each share of Boston-based Gillette, which would value the company at about $54 per share, based on the closing P&G share price of $55.32 on Thursday.

P&G also plans to buy back $18 billion to $22 billion of its stock during the next 18 months, the companies said in a joint announcement. That will ultimately result in the deal being financed through about 60 percent stock and 40 percent cash, the companies said.

P&G sales would surge to more than $60 billion annually, from about $51 billion now. The deal is subject to review by regulators and shareholders of both companies.

Gillette CEO James M. Kilts will become vice chairman of Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble, and will join its board.

"This combination of two best-in-class consumer products companies, at a time when they are both operating from a position of strength, is a unique opportunity," said A.G. Lafley, P&G's chairman, president and chief executive. "Gillette and P&G have similar cultures and complementary core strengths in branding, innovation, scale and go-to-market capabilities, making it a terrific fit."

Among the biggest winners is Berkshire Hathaway Inc., Gillette's largest shareholder, with 96 million shares, or about 93.6 million P&G shares. Berkshire chairman and CEO Warren Buffett called the combination "a dream deal" and said he plans to own 100 million P&G shares by the time the deal closes, which is expected late this year.

The companies said they expect to save $14 billion to $16 billion in annual costs, and cut about 6,000 jobs as part of the integration. That represents about 4 percent of a combined 140,000-person work force.

P&G also raised its annual sales target to a range of 5 percent to 7 percent, from 4 percent to 6 percent previously, based on the Gillette acquisition.

Shares of Cincinnati-based P&G have risen nearly a third since 2003, as the company's strong stable of global brands has powered consistent profits and sales growth. That rise has given the consumer-products behemoth plenty of stock currency to pursue acquisitions.

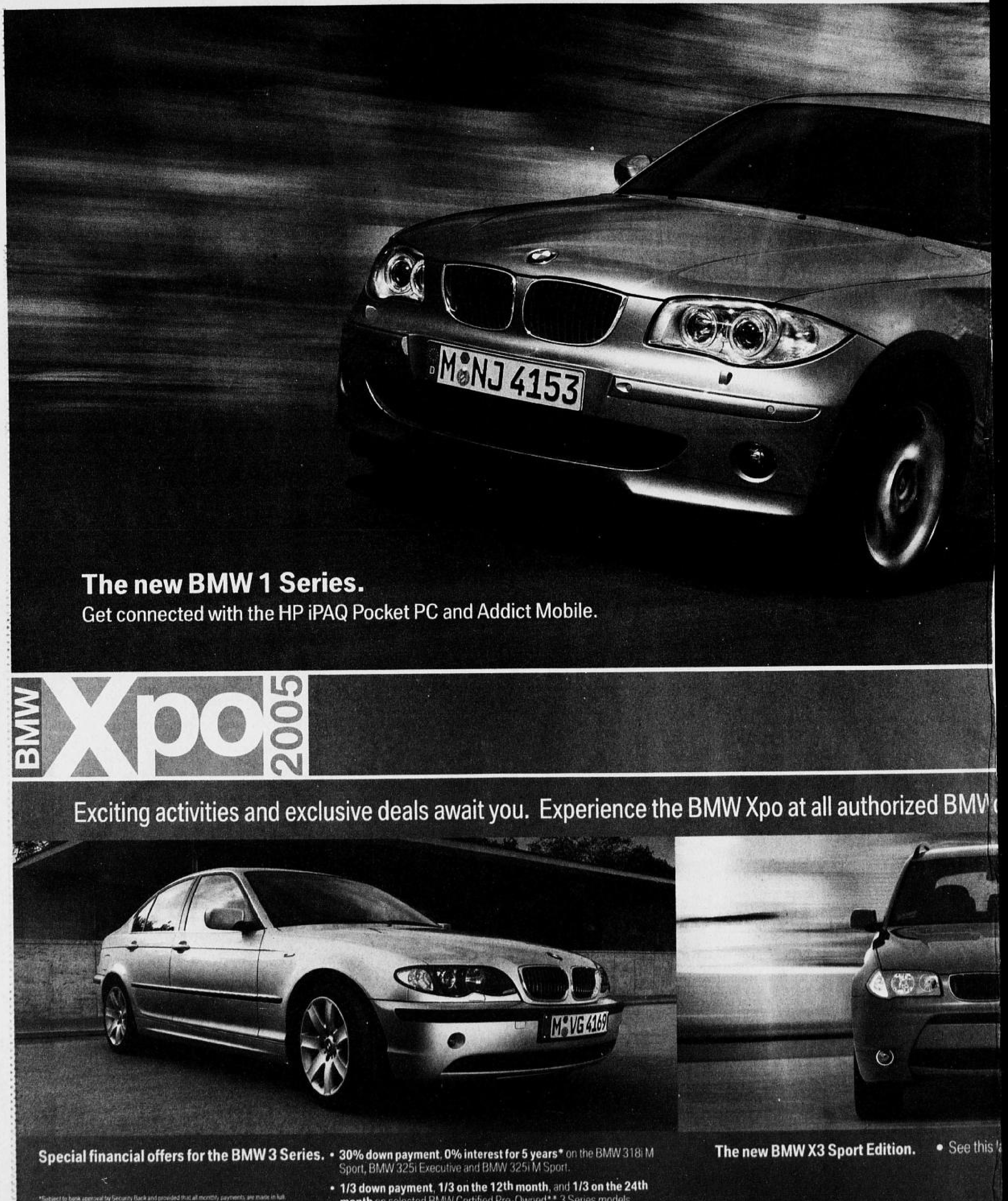
P&G released its quarterly earnings on Thursday, a day earlier than planned.

The company reported another strong quarter, with a 12-percent rise in net income to $2.04 billion, or 74 cents per share, from $1.8 billion, or 65 cents per share, in the same period a year ago.

In its most recent quarter, Gillette reported income of $475 million, up from $416 million.

Gillette shares closed at $45.85 Thursday on the New York Stock Exchange, just below the 52-week high of $45.90 they hit during the session. *AP*

THE GILLETTE World Shaving Headquarters plant in South Boston. Procter & Gamble Co. is preparing to buy the battery and shaving-products firm for $57 billion in stock. If approved, the deal would create the world's largest consumer-products company. AP



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Southeast Asia stocks end higher

SINGAPORE—Most Southeast Asian stock markets yesterday traded higher, but telecom shares weighed on Malaysia amid speculation their earnings would be hit by rising capital spending.

Tokyo shares yesterday fell on bleak earnings outlooks from firms such as Kyocera Corp., but microchip maker TSMC led gains in Taiwan after it forecast strong recovery from the second quarter.

Singapore's Straits Times index went up 0.61 percent, and Thailand's index was 0.26 percent higher, helped by generally better-than-expected company results.

Malaysian stocks fell 0.55 percent to a 3-week intraday low, with Maxis Communications down 0.50 percent and Telekom Malaysia falling 0.9 percent.

Dealers in Kuala Lumpur said worries about higher capital spending have hit Maxis since it announced plans on Jan. 20 to buy a small Indonesian cellular operator, Natrindo Telepon Seluler, which analysts said was an expensive acquisition.

The yen jumped against the dollar after a Chinese official said the time was ripe for China to gradually move toward a more flexible exchange rate policy, but it fell back after the official said the views were his own and not those of the government.

"The market is moving this way and that on every little comment on the Chinese yuan, but most of this is pure noise," said Ko Haruki at HSBC in Tokyo. "China will move when it wants to move, and until then, I think it would be wise to start refocusing on US fundamentals like the upcoming GDP data, which has the potential to support the dollar."

Japan's Nikkei index ended 0.2 percent lower at 11,320.58, hurt by a 1.7 percent fall in chip stock Kyocera Corp. after it cut its full-year profit forecast on Thursday.

Tokyo shares were hurt by Japanese industrial data that some analysts said underlined difficult business conditions at some high-tech companies.

"The December data showed inventory levels of electronic equipment and devices stayed high, and the sector's production didn't pick up, either," said Tsuyoshi Nomaguchi of Daiwa Securities. "That was just underscored by a series of recent poor earnings results from electronics parts makers."

After Wall Street closed, Microsoft Corp., the world's largest software maker, said its quarterly profit doubled on stronger demand for personal computers and video games as well as lower costs. Its shares rose 1.9 percent in after-hours trade.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 0.3 percent to 10,467.40. The Nasdaq Composite gained 0.05 percent to 2,047.15. *Reuters*

Oil prices drop in Asia trade

SINGAPORE—Oil prices yesterday fell in Asian trade on forecasts of milder weekend temperatures in the northeast of the United States and news that Opec will likely maintain current production levels, dealers said.

Yesterday, New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in March stood at $48.67 a barrel, down 14 cents from its close of $48.81 a barrel on Thursday in New York, where prices had climbed 27 cents.

"It's a standoff at this stage because the weather is expected to be slightly warmer this week so the market has cooled off a bit," said Eswaran Ramasamy, a Singapore-based director of energy information provider Platts.

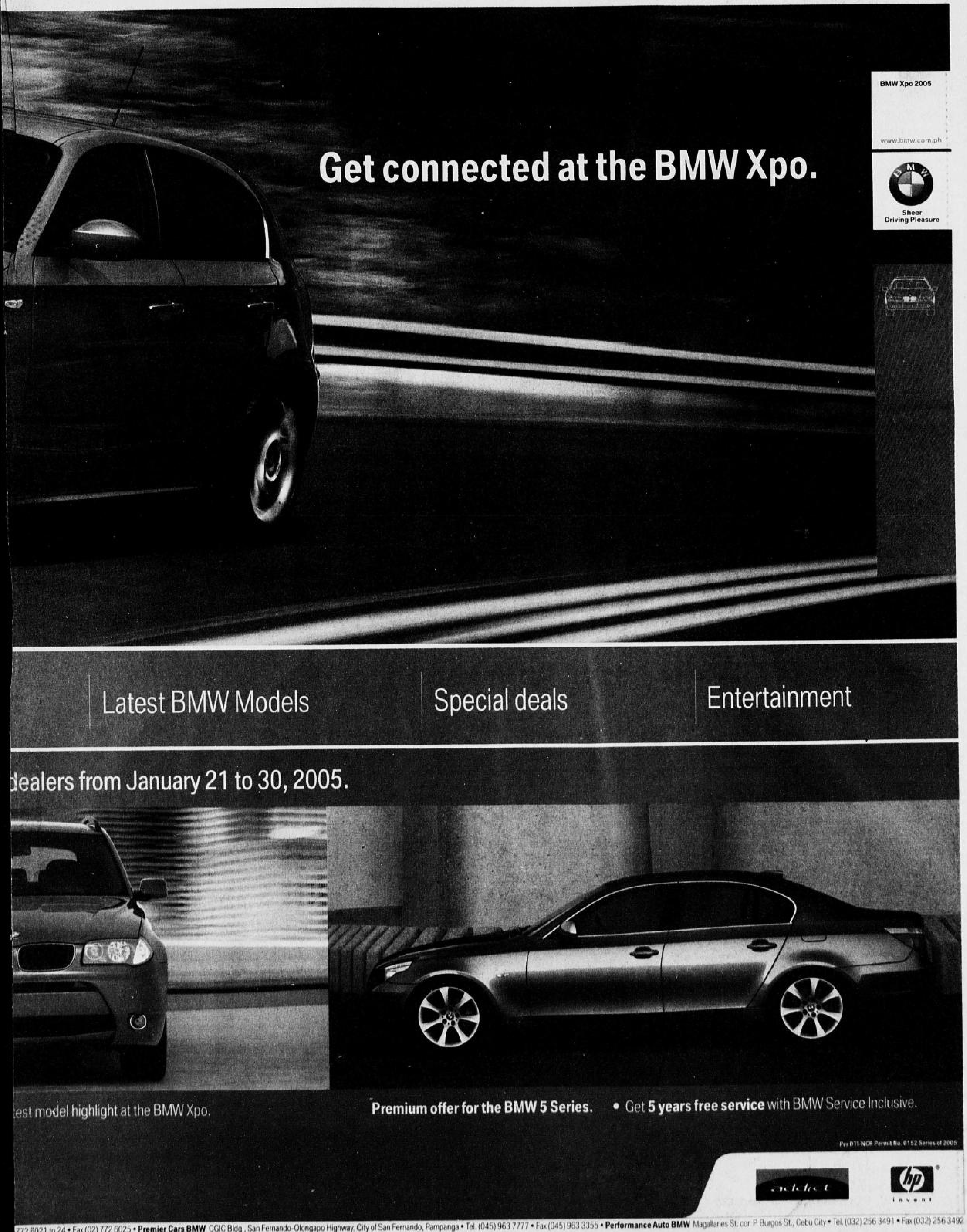
Ramasamy said current price movements involving only a few cents showed that the market had no direction in Asia on Friday as it waited for trading to resume in the United States and Europe.

He said there could be some price weakening following forecasts for temperatures in the US northeast to remain at slightly above zero, until next week after the region was battered by a snowstorm on Sunday.

"This shows the cold front has moved away, but still the market is waiting to see if there's a real change in the weather," he said.

Ramasamy added a statement by the president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) that the cartel would likely maintain current output levels also helped calm the market.

Kuwaiti Energy Minister Sheikh Ahmad Fahd al-Sabah, Opec president, said in a television interview in Switzerland Thursday that he expected the cartel's oil ministers would agree at a meeting this weekend to the "same ceiling without any cut." *AFP*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We lovingly remember our **Papa** on his
Twenty Fourth Death Anniversary

OSCAR VENTANILLA, SR.

a consummate entrepreneur, outstanding councilor,
and a benevolent father,

of Cabanatuan City
who died on January 29, 1981

Holy Masses will be offered today
at the following churches:

1. **Saint Nicholas Tolentine Cathedral** *Cabanatuan City* .... All masses
2. **Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel** *Cabanatuan City* .... 6:00 P.M.
3. **Our Lady of Fatima Parish** *Philamlife Homes, Las Piñas, M.M.* .... All masses
4. **Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary** *Multinational Village, Parañaque, M.M.* .... All masses
5. **Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary** *Rosario Complex, San Pedro, Laguna* .... All masses
6. **Sto. Niño de Cebu Parish** *Biñan, Laguna* .... All masses
7. **Parish of the Holy Sacrifice** *U.P. Campus, Diliman, Quezon City* .... All masses
8. **Sta. Maria Della Strada Parish** *Katipunan Ave., Diliman, Quezon City* .... All masses
9. **St. James the Great** *Alabang Village, Muntinlupa* .... All masses
10. **St. Jerome Emiliani and Sta. Susana Parish** *Ayala Alabang Village* .... All masses
11. **Mary Help of Christians Parish** *Better Living Subdivision, Parañaque* .... All masses
12. **Immaculate Conception Parish** *Concepcion, Marikina City* .... 6:00 A.M.
13. **St. Basil the Great Church** *Brecksville, Ohio, U.S.A.* .... 9:00 A.M.

His surviving children **Gloria, Oscar Jr., Rosalinda**; sons and daughters-in-law; and grandchildren, request relatives, friends and pious readers to join them in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

ESTER HISITA MELLA vda. de CATIBAYAN

has joined our Creator, and her husband **Manuel**
on 25 January 2005, at the age of 77.

She is survived by her children **Chito and Alice, Girlie and Edwin Guarin, Bullet and Jette, Beng, Cherry and Edwin Ravago, Mimi, Israel and Feliza, Isabel and AJ Panahon**; grandchildren **Euclid, Phoebe, Isaac, Isaiah, Allouh, Eman(+), Jap-jap, Christian, Ramuel, Alec, Ally,** and **James**; brother and sister-in-law **Javier and Myrna**; sister **Lolita**; nephews, nieces, relatives and in-laws.

Her body lies in state at St. Joseph Chapel, Our Lady of the Pillar Parish Church, Mercury Road, Pilar Village, Las Piñas City.

Holy mass will be offered today, 29 January 2005 at 8:00 pm at St. Joseph Chapel. Interment will be tomorrow, 30 January 2005, in Naic, Cavite.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."
The Lord's servant, A SECULAR FRANCISCAN,

NORMA YU-MANABAT, SFO

of Magdalena, Laguna and Marikina City

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 26, 2005 at the age of 69.

Her bereaved husband **Tony**; daughters **Tonet** and **Wayi**; son-in-law **Mat**; grandchildren **Yeye** and **Kyang**; brothers and sisters, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for her eternal repose and everlasting happiness.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel 1 Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 30, 2005, at 4:00 p.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

DR. PACITA NIEVA CAMARA

Optometrist

wife of **Santiago A. Camara** (†)
of Atimonan, Quezon

Passed away on January 27, 2005
at the age of 81.

Her body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City.

She is survived by her loving sister **Sol Nieva** and children **Dito** and **Emma, Boy** and **Dedette, Milo** and **Charie**, and **Vic** (†), sister-in-law **Charing**, grandchildren and great granchild **Uno**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment will be on February 1, 2005 after the 9 am Mass at Loyola Gardens, Marikina City.

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
John 14:6

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

CECILIA FACUNDO MORALES

who passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on January 11, 2005

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude
and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered masses
and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy
and who in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us
in our hour of bereavement.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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FUNERARIA FILIPINAS
885 J.P. Rizal St., Poblacion Makati City Tels 890-3556; 899-8181
LOYOLA MEMORIAL CHAPELS
EDSA cor. Bernardino St. Guadalupe Makati City Tels 890-1011 to 18
MALABED FUNERAL SERVICE
3-A Coronado St. Guadalupe Viejo Makati City Tel 880-63-13
SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO PARISH
Forbes Park, Makati City. Tel Nos 843-6836/30 Fax No 843-9223
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGOURI PARISH
Magallanes Village Makati City. Tels 852-8228, 852-7264

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9 V. Gomez & 13 V. Gomez St. San Roque, Marikina City. Tels 646-1725 or 646-1730
LOYOLA MEMORIAL PARK CHAPELS & CREMATORY SERVICES
Loyola Memorial Park A. Bonifacio Avenue Tañong Marikina City
Tels 941-3196 to 98, 941-3576, Telefax 941-3577
PAKET SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
13 V. Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City Tels 646-1725, 646-1730

• PARAÑAQUE

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Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila Tels 642-6161 to 62
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Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan 3011; Tels (044) 764-0281 676-0208, (0917) 835-0003

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CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE OF AUCTION SALE

By virtue of Section III, Article VIII of its Re-Amended By-Laws, and by resolution of the Board of Directors during its regular meeting on November 27, 2004, Valley Golf & Country Club, Inc. will cause to be sold at public auction at its Main Clubhouse, Antipolo City on Friday, February 25, 2005, at exactly 10:00 a.m., the following certificates of stock for cash to the highest bidder(s) to satisfy the principal claims of the Club, plus attorney's fees, surcharges/interests and expenses of sales thereof. The following certificates of stock pertain to delinquent accounts which have remained unpaid for a period over 120 days, posted as delinquent, have exceeded the credit limit as fixed by the Board, and have been previously notified of their delinquent accounts.

Stock Cert. No.	Account No.	Declared Acct. Name	Principal Claim
1206	0862	Ysmael Steel Mfg. Co.	PhP 785,071.49
2144	0957	Vicente T. Chua, Jr.	601,235.62
2158	0976	Victor S. de Vera	438,643.95
1266	0654	Ernesto L. Floro	257,856.60
669	0495	Emilio G. Martinez	257,844.28
601	0176	Felipe L. Liwanag	257,661.14
3338	0511	Emerito M. Ramos, Sr.	171,032.15
1547	0782	S. Kajita & Co.	205,301.11
3240	0036	Anderson Co.	101,026.35
2223	0555	Patrick Boll	105,168.35
2275	0875	Fuller O'Brien Paint Co., Inc.	93,317.75
2817	0087	Aurelio Litonjua III/Bank of Commerce	89,249.66
3137	0163	Carola Mollior	88,411.82
580	0355	Carlos Valdez	89,147.21
2375	0560	Isaias Arriola, Jr.	82,140.97

All bids shall be payable in cash immediately after the sale. The Club reserves the right to set a minimum bid price on the terms of the sale.

Antipolo City, January 13, 2005.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
VALLEY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, INC.

(PDI–Jan. 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SUGAR REGULATORY ADMINISTRATION
North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
P.O. Box 70, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City
TIN 000-784-336-000

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) through its Bidding and Awards Committee (BAC) invites interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the:

SUPPLY OF LABOR, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE INSTALLATION
OF ONE (1) UNIT MACHINE ROOMLESS ELEVATOR FOR THE
FOUR (4) STOREY SRA ANNEX BUILDING
Approved Budget for the Contract – Php 2,700,000.00

Schedule of Bidding Activities

Issuance of Eligibility Requirements	January 24, 2005 – February 4, 2005 7:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. SRA Bidding Secretariat 3rd Floor Annex Building Sugar Regulatory Administration North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Submission of Eligibility Requirements	February 5-11, 2005
Issuance of Bid Documents	February 14-16, 2005 for a non-refundable fee of Php 2,000.00
Pre-Bid Conference	February 17, 2005 9:00 A.M. Social Hall, Sugar Regulatory Administration North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Submission & Opening of Bid Envelopes	March 2, 2005 9:00 A.M. Social Hall, Sugar Regulatory Administration North Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

All particulars relative to the Eligibility, Bid bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contracts shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations and other applicable government rules and regulations.

The SRA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense incurred in the preparation of the bids.

The SRA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or informality therein or accept any bid(s) or offer(s) which it may consider to be advantageous and beneficial to the government.

(Sgd.) JAMES C. LEDESMA
Administrator

(PDI – January 22 & 29, 2005)

INVITATION TO BID

The Nueva Ecija II Electric Cooperative, Inc. now invites Sealed Bids from eligible bidders to bid for assorted scrap (iron/steel), unserviceable electrical equipment/devices and unserviceable vehicles with the floor price of P2,219,059.16.

The Bidding Documents may be purchased from Nueva Ecija II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (NEECO II) Main Office, Calipahan, Talavera, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, upon submission of a written application to the above and upon payment of non-refundable fee of THREE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS ONLY (P3,500.00) in cash beginning January 31 to February 8, 2005.

Sealed proposal will be received by the NEECO II - Committee on Disposal of Non-Performing Assets at NEECO II Main Office on or before 2:00 p.m., February 19, 2005 at which time and place of said proposal will be opened and read in the presence of Bidders or Bidder's authorized representatives who choose to attend. Late submission will not be accepted.

Pre-bid Conference and Inspection of scrap materials will be conducted at the NEECO II Main Office at 2:00 p.m. on February 11, 2005.

All bids submitted must be accompanied by a bid security of not less than ten (10%) percent of the total bid price.

The NEECO II hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informalities therein and to accept such bid as may be considered advantageous to the cooperative.

(Sgd.) ENGR. JOSEPHINE L. BADIOLA
Chairperson, Committee on Disposal

(PDI - Jan. 29 & 30, 2005)

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E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites all interested Trucking/Hauling Operators to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply of Trucking/Hauling Services for 2005 NFA imported and local rice covering the following specific routes:

	SOURCES/DESTINATION	Estimated Volume (in 50-kg Bag) for Transfer	Estimated Budget for the Contract(Rate in PhP/Bag xTotal Volume)
	LA UNION STAGING WHSES TO:		
1.	NFA Warehouses in ABRA	22,000	P 329,940.00
2.	NFA Warehouses in BENGUET	280,000	P 4,620,000.00
3.	NFA Warehouses in ILOCOS NORTE	60,000	P 1,296,600.00
4.	NFA Warehouses in ILOCOS SUR	105,000	P 1,160,600.00
5.	NFA Warehouses in EAST PANGASINAN	165,000	P 1,863,950.00
6.	NFA Warehouses in WEST PANGASINAN	228,000	P 2,664,300.00
	TOTAL	860,000	P11,935,390.00

Interested Trucking/Hauling Operators may bid in any or all specified/preferred destinations.
The Sschedule of Bidding activities is as follows:

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Issuance of Application and List of Eligibility Requirements, Bidding Documents	January 31-February 9, 2005	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2.	Pre-bidding Conference	February 10, 2005	10:00 AM
3.	Deadline for the Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of bids will follow immediately)	February 23, 2005	10:00 AM

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

The pre-bid conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at the NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA Office Building, San Juan, La Union. All Trucking/Hauling Operators interested to participate in the bidding must be registered/accredited with NFA. Interested bidders who are not NFA-Accredited Trucking/Hauling Operators and/or whose Registration had already expired may still participate provided they shall apply for accreditation/renewal at NFA Region I not later than February 9, 2005.

The eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using simple "Pass/Fail" criteria and shall be considered as either "Eligible" or "Ineligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Passed" for all the requirements, he shall be considered "Eligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Failed" in any one of the requirements, he shall be considered "Ineligible."

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidder's largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract be bid must at least 50% of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

A single stage bidding will be adopted using a simple pass/fail criteria for the evaluation. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously three (3) envelopes, one containing the eligibility requirements and two (2) envelopes containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instruction to Bidders.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando at the Regional Office 01, San Juan La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 and (072) 700-25-79.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGH T TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI**
Assistant Regional Manager
& Chairman, RBAC

(PDI – January 29 & February 4, 2005)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF UNSERVICEABLE ITEMS

"AS IS; WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : **February 22, 2005**, 2:00 PM, Solarium Hall, Building-1, Ground Floor NPC-Head Office, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City.

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding for the sale of the following items:

ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
	SCHEDULE-I: Simultaneous Public Bidding at NPC Baguio Office and at NPC Head Office, Diliman, Quezon City	
-1-	One (1) Lot: Unserviceable items consisting of junk Heavy Equipment (Bulldozer, Grader, Dump-Truck, Pay-Loader, Fork-Lift and Bus-body) and used General Plant Parts and discarded Office Equipment. Located at Ambuklao Hydro-Electric Power Plant, Bokod Town, Benguet Province.	P575,300.00 per lot
-2-	One (1) Lot: Unserviceable and junk Vehicles consisting of Two (2) units Passenger Bus (SAN-307 / SDG-267). One (1) unit Toyota L/C Jeep (SAN-309), One (1) unit Isuzu Pick-up (SCC-456) and dilapidated/totally junk Ford-Fiera. Located at Ambuklao Hydro-Electric Power Plant, Bokod Town, Benguet Province.	P175,000.00 per lot
-3-	One (1) Lot: Unserviceable items consisting of Electrical Cables assorted types, sizes and lengths, Junk Heavy Equipment (3 units Dump Truck) and discarded / used items, including expired chemicals, old records, cartons and newspapers). Located at Binga Hydro-Electric Power Plant, Itogon Town, Bengeut Province.	P729,000.00 per lot
	SCHEDULE-II: NPC Head Office, Solarium, Diliman, Quezon City.	
-1-	One (1) lot: Unserviceable, junk and scrap items consisting of used General Plant Parts and Office Equipment, Guest House Furnishings, Motor Pool and Laboratory parts. Located at Magat River HEP in Brgy. Aguinaldo, Ramon Town, Isabela Province.	P862,000.00 per lot
-2-	One (1) lot: Barite, consisting of 4,114 bags, 100 lbs/bag. Located at Mak-Ban Geothermal Power Plant, Bay Town, Laguna Province.	P261.00 per bag

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:
1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN 2003 ORIGINAL (OR CERTIFIED XEROX COPY) FOR THE BIDDER OR AN AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for this public bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return.

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00 / Schedule from Mr. S.V. Lomuntad, Jr. / Mr. Al Plata at MMD, Ground Floor, Bldg.-1, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone no. 924-5384. Bidders for Schedule-I may secure the Bid Forms at Upper Agno Project Office, Plaza Natalia Bldg., Naguilian Road, Baguio City. Deadline for issuance of the bid forms is until 4:30 PM, February 21, 2005.

For the Materials Management Department
FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI – Jan. 27, 28 & 29, 2005)

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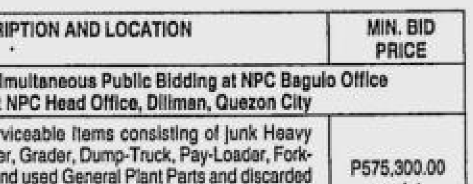

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

SOP No. SS-E104

To : All Concerned
Subject : GUIDELINES ON THE CONFISCATION/SEIZURE AND DISPOSITION OF RICE FROM APPREHENDED GRAINS BUSINESSMEN .

For the information, guidance and compliance of all concerned, published hereunder is the Guidelines on the Confiscation/Seizure and Disposition of Rice from Apprehended Grains Businessmen.

I. TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. Objective

To establish the standard procedures to be followed by the concerned NFA personnel in the confiscation/seizure and subsequent disposition of rice from apprehended grains businessmen.

B. Scope

This SOP shall cover procedures on the following:
1. Apprehension of grains businessmen for violation of PD No. 4, NFA Rules and Regulations on Grains Business, and other related rules and issuances such as, but not limited to: hoarding, cornering and diversion of grains stocks.
2. Confiscation/seizure of rice from apprehended grains businessmen, and
3. Disposition of the confiscated / seized rice.

II. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

A. Statement of Policies
1. Grains businessmen who have violated PD No. 4, NFA Rules and Regulations on Grains Business, Orders, Circulars and other related rules and issuances shall be apprehended by the NFA. An apprehension may occur (a) in the course of NFA's regular inspection, investigation, enforcement or surveillance activities, or (b) as a result of a tip-off or information received by the NFA on an alleged irregularity in rice trading. An apprehension may be made while the stocks are (a) in-transit, or (b) stored in the grains businessmen's warehouse, business establishment or other premises where the stocks are stored.
2. Apprehensions to be made by the NFA which may result to confiscation/seizure of subject stocks shall be done in close coordination with the local Philippine National Police (PNP). For this purpose, a Memorandum of Agreement shall be executed between the NFA and the PNP.
3. The NFA shall only confiscate / seize rice from grains businessmen if the reason for apprehension is hoarding or cornering pursuant to PD No. 4. Otherwise, the confiscation/seizure shall be done by authorized government enforcement agencies such as the Bureau of Customs, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine National Police, with the assistance of the NFA.
4. The NFA shall make available its facilities upon request of these agencies for the transport and/or storage of confiscated/seized rice subject to applicable rates on storage, handling, trucking and other administrative costs that may be incurred chargeable to the erring grains businessmen.
5. The confiscated/seized rice, while still being a subject of litigation, may be released to the alleged owner provided that the following conditions are satisfied:
   a. Alleged owner shall submit a written request to NFA for the release of the confiscated/seized stocks. The request shall be supported by an Order for the Release of the confiscated/seized rice from the Prosecutor's Office if case is pending therein or a Court Order if case is already filed in the court.
   b. Alleged owner shall post a bond equivalent to the total value of confiscated/seized rice (NFA prevailing price plus storage and other incidental expenses) in the form of cash, manager's check or demand bank draft. The manager's check and the demand bank draft shall be issued preferably by the Land Bank of the Philippines, PNB, PCI Bank, Metro Bank or Banco de Oro since the NFA accounts are maintained in said banks, thus, clearing transactions are facilitated.
   If the confiscated/seized stocks are found to be illegally acquired, the bond shall be forfeited in favor of the NFA. Otherwise, the bond shall be released but only after the grains businessman has paid all applicable fees and other incidental expenses incurred by the NFA.
6. The alleged owner of the confiscated/seized rice may also request NFA to dispose of the stocks, while still under litigation, to prevent deterioration. The request shall be supported by a written order from the court which has jurisdiction over the case for the sale of the confiscated/seized rice.
7. Disposition of the confiscated/seized stocks shall be through public bidding to be undertaken by the concerned NFA Disposition Committee.
8. Proceeds of the sale of the confiscated/seized stocks, less administrative cost and other incidental expenses incurred by the NFA, shall be deposited in escrow to the court of jurisdiction until final judgement has been rendered.

A. Detailed Procedures/Responsibilities

A.1. Apprehension, Confiscation/Seizure of Stocks

1. ***For apprehensions made while stocks are in transit.***
   EIPD Personnel/Reg'l. Enforcement and Intelligence Officer (REIO)/Prov'l. Enforcement and Intelligence Officer (PEIO).
   a. Shows/discloses authority as deputized officer of the NFA.
   b. Requires alleged owner of rice/representative to present proof of purchase of the rice in his possession (in truck) such as Invoice, Bill of Lading, Letter of Credit, Shipping clearance, OR, WSI, AI, etc.
   c. If properly documented, releases the rice/truck
   d. If no proof of purchase can be presented, coordinates immediately with the local PNP units for assistance. ***Failure to present documents upon demand is prima-facie evidence that the rice is illegally acquired.***

   LOCAL PNP
   a. Confiscates/seizes rice, brings truck to the nearest PNP local station together with the rice and all the persons in the truck.
   b. Conducts investigation, secures affidavit/ sworn statement from the alleged owner / representative relative to the commission of the offense.
   c. Files necessary charges.

   EIPD/REIO/PEIO
   a. Takes samples of confiscated/seized rice in the presence of the local PNP and the alleged owner of rice or representative.
   b. Takes photos of the truck with the confiscated rice.
   c. Serves summons to the apprehended grains businessman/representative.

   If PNP requests to turn over confiscated rice to NFA for storage:
   EIPD/REIO/PEIO
   a. Transfers rice immediately to the nearest NFA warehouse.
   b. Ensures that receipt of the confiscated rice at the NFA warehouse is properly documented following the usual warehouse stock documentation procedures.
   c. Checks if truck is registered with the NFA. Releases truck if registered, is not, issues summons to the owner of the truck.
2. ***For apprehensions made in the grains businessman's warehouses or business establishment as a result of a tip-off or information on an alleged irregularity in rice trading***
   NFA EIPD/REIO/PEIO
   a. Coordinates with the local PNP for assistance.
   b. Demands proof of purchase/acquisition from the grains businessman/representative for the rice found in his possession such as Invoice, Bill of Lading, Letter of Credit, Shipping Clearance, OR, WSI, AI, etc.
   c. If no proof or purchase can be presented, serves summons to the grains businessman.
   d. Takes samples of the undocumented rice in the presence of the grains businessman/representative.
   e. Determines volume of rice subject of the summons.
   f. Takes photos of the undocumented rice in the grains businessman's warehouse or business establishment.

   If reason for apprehension is hoarding or cornerning:
   g. Seizes/confiscates undocumented rice.
   h. Ensures that turn-over of seized/confiscated rice to NFA's custody is properly documented. Documents shall clearly indicate the quanitity and quality of rice and duly acknowledged by the apprehended grains businessmen/representative.
   i. Transfers confiscated/seized stocks to the nearest NFA warehouse
   j. Ensures the receipt of stocks at the NFA warehouse is properly documented following the usual NFA warehouse stock documentation procedures.

   For reasons other than hoarding or cornering
   Local PNP
   a. Confiscates/seizes rice
   b. Conducts investigation, secures affidavit/sworn statement from the alleged owner/representative relative to the commission of the offense
   c. Files necessary charges.

A.2. Disposition of confiscated/seized rice

a. ***If alleged owner requests NFA for the release of seized/confiscated rice while still undergoing litigation process.***
   EIPD/REIO/PEIO
   i. Requires alleged owner of rice to:
      - Secure an Order for the Release of the confiscated/seized rice from the Prosecutor's Office if case is pending therein or a Court Order if case is already filed in court.
      - Post a bond equivalent to the total value of confiscated seized rice (NFA prevailing price plus storage and other incidental expenses) in the form of cash, manager's check or demand bank draft. The manager's check and the demand bank draft shall be issued preferably in the Land Bank of the Philippines, PNB, PCI Bank, Metro Bank or Banco de Oro, since NFA account are maintained in said banks, thus, clearing transactions are facilitated:
   ii. Releases confiscated/seized rice to alleged owner after all requirements has been complied with.
   iii. If final judgement has been rendered and the confiscated/seized rice is found to be illegally acquired, forfeits bond in favor of the NFA. If rice is found to be illegally acquired, facilitates release of bond after the grains businessman has paid/settled all applicable fees and other incidental expenses incurred by the NFA.
   iv. Stipulate, with the NFA as to the quantity and quality of the confiscated/seized rice.

b. ***If alleged owner requests NFA to sell the confiscated/seized rice while still undergoing process.***
   EIPD/REIO/PEIO
   i. Requires alleged owner of the confiscated/seized rice to secure a written order from the Prosecutor's Office or the Court which has jurisdiction over the case for the sale of the confiscated/seized rice.
   ii. Coordinates with the concerned NFA Disposition Committee for the immediate sale of the confiscated/seized rice.
   iii. Informs alleged owner of rice of the schedule of the sale and advise him to be present during the actual bidding.

   NFA Disposition Committee
   i. Disposes confiscated/seized rice through public bidding.
   ii. Ensures that proceeds of sale less administrative cost and other incidental expenses is deposited in escrow to the court of jurisdiction until final judgement has been rendered.

This Guidelines shall take effect fifteen (15) calendar days after its publication in a newspaper of general nationwide circulation.

(Sgd.) **GREGORIO Y. TAN, JR.**
NFA Administrator

(PDI – January 29, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region 01, San Juan, La Union
Tel. # : (072) 242-59-09 & (072) 700-25-79
Fax # : (072) 242-59-07 & (072) 252-59-08
E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR INTEGRATED CARGO HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA REGION 01

The National Food Authority, NFA Regional Office 01, San Juan, La Union invites qualified Integrated Cargo Handling Services Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the provision of Integrated Cargo Handling Services in the discharging of more or less 50,000 MT or 1,000,000 bags rice imports for the year 2005, at Poro Port, San Fernando City and delivery to designated warehouses with La Union to include but not limited to arrastre, stevedoring, wharfage, maintenance and security fee, hauler's pass, truckscaling, and trucking with an Approved Budget for the Contract of P20,391,525.00.

The Schedule of Bidding activities are as follows:
1. Issuance of Application and List of Eligibility Requirements, Bidding Documents
   – January 31-February 09, 2005 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
2. Pre-Bidding Conference – February 10, 2005 (10:00 a.m.)
3. Deadline for the Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of Bids will follow immediately)
   – February 23, 2005 (10:00 a.m.)

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

The deadline for submission of application for eligibility and to bid, eligibility requirements, bid proposals and other required documents shall be on February 23, 2005 not later than 10:00 o'clock A.M. at NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA Office Building, San Juan, La Union.

The eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using simple "Pass/Fail criteria and shall be considered as either "eligible" or "ineligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Passed" for all the requirements, he shall be considered "eligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Failed" in any one of the requirements, he shall be considered ineligible.

A single stage bidding will be adopted using a simple pass/fail criteria for the evaluation. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously three (3) envelopes one containing the eligibility requirements and two (2) envelopes containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instructions to Bidders.

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidders largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract be bid must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGH T TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando or RBAC Secretariat Ms. Noemi Susan T. Buncab at the Regional Office 01, San Juan La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 or (072) 700-25-79.

(Sgd.) **RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI**
Assistant Regional Manager
& RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 29 & February 4, 2005)

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Fax # : (072) 242-59-07 & (072) 252-59-08
E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR HANDLING SERVICES

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites all interested Handling Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Unloading Services of 2005 NFA imported / local rice at the different NFA / Leased Warehouses in Region I, to wit:

	Province / Destination / Warehouses	Approved Volume (in bags of 50 kg) for Transfer Within the Region	Approved Budget for the Contract (Rate per bag of 50 kg (P) per trip x Total Volume
1.	NFA GID Warehouse, San Juan/ Staging Warehouse, La Union	1,860,000	5,580,000.00
2.	NFA Loakan/NFA Kadiwa Warehouse Baguio City	280,000	840,000.00
3.	NFA GID Warehouse, Abra	22,000	66,000.00
4.	NFA GID Warehouse, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte	60,000	180,000.00
5.	NFA GID Warehouse, Bantay, Ilocos Sur	105,000	315,000.00
6.	NFA GID Warehouse, Binalonan/ NFA Rosales Warehouse, Rosales, Pangasinan	165,000	495,000.00
7.	NFA GID Alaminos/ NFA GID Warehouse, Mangatarem, Pangasinan	228,000	684,000.00

Interested Handling Contractors may bid on any or all warehouse-destinations.
The Schedule of Bidding activities are as follows:
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   – January 31-February 09, 2005 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
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THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando or RBAC Secretariat Ms. Noemi Susan T. Buncab at the Regional Office 01, San Juan, La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 or (072) 700-25-79.

(Sgd.) **RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI**
Assistant Regional Manager
& RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 29 & February 4, 2005)

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **DELFI SHIPPING AGENCY INC.** has filed an application with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration for a license to engage in sea-based recruitment.

The following are the Company's stockholders, directors and officers:

GREGORIO F. ORTEGA	President/Director/Stockholder
SPATHARAKIS KYRIAKOS	Director/Stockholder
RHOUAN S. LOSERIAGA	Director/Stockholder
RICHARD Y. KING	Director/Stockholder
DENNISON PHILIP T. TAN	Corp. Sec./Director/Stockholder
ENRICO L. LINDO, JR.	General Manager

(Sgd.) **DENNISON PHILIP T. TAN**
Corporate Secretary

(PDI--Jan. 29, 2005)

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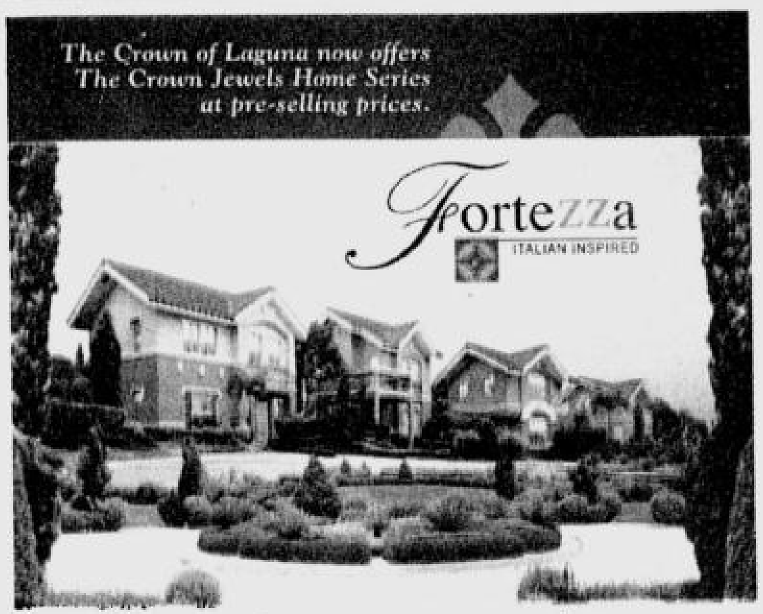

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LOT

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QUEZON CITY

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Registration & Judging of Sporting Grp & Terrier Grp
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Registration & Judging of Hound Group / Toy Group
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NOTICE OF LOSS
Notice is hereby given that Plates No NYA-680 registered in the name of DIONISIO M MAQUIO, was lost per Affidavit of Loss dated Jan. 26, 2005 under the Notarial Registry of Atty Leonardo F. Gonzales as Doc 04; Page 01; Book 101, Series of 2005.
(PDI Jan 29 Feb 5 & 12 2005)

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

MS. IMELDA F. ALAY

This is to inform the public that **MS. IMELDA F. ALAY,** whose picture appears above, is no longer connected to REMINGTON INDUSTRIAL SALES CORPORATION since January 18, 2005. Any transaction entered into in behalf of said company is considered illegal, unlawful and will not be honored by Remington Industrial Sales Corporation.

For the guidance of the public.

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(PDI - January 29, 2005)

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NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publication, if you are:

	NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1)	Alejandria Trinidad Acta Edward Acta	Unknown	Basilio Acta, Jr. SS#03-3072235-9	April 28, 2002
2)	Antonio Amad	Prk 8 Tiburcia Kapalong, Davao del Norte	Leo R. Amad SS#09-2106185-6	May 19, 2001
3)	Evangeline D. Baltazar	Ilocos Norte	Willard Generos T. Baltazar SS#01-0738595-8	October 15, 2004
4)	Emma	Unknown	Florentino P. Banagan SS#08-04-2727-8	April 19, 2004
5)	Gaudencio Cristobal	Unknown	Marilyn G. Basilio SS#03-4858665-5	October 27, 2004
6)	Alberto, Josefina, Nazario & Gilda Campaner	Carcar, Cebu City	Marcos T. Campaner SS#06-0182442-3	March 5, 2004
7)	Akmad Kimol	Unknown	Roberto O. Daaco SS#03-4217139-6	July 17, 2001
8)	Emilia Dolon Catalina A. Dolon	Unknown	Vicente Dolon SS#03-0381366-4	August 30, 2004
9)	Vivian C. Macalinao	Unknown	Federico C. Elane SS#33-3816979-1	August 1, 2004
10)	Alejandro Macawili	Buabua, Salcedo, Samar	Florentino Enderio SS#03-1644974-0	April 18, 2002
11)	Luzviminda G. Garcia	Garcia Lodge, San Fernando, La Union	Romualdo A. Garcia SS#03-1382096-4	May 1, 2004
12)	Carlina Managa	Unknown	Rodelio T. Gonzales SS#03-2382281-3	April 3, 2003
13)	Melinda Delos Santos Macavilo, Shiela Mare & Marlon	537 J.P. Rizal St., B.S., Q.C.	Manuel N. Jasmin SS#03-1797428-5	October 19, 2004
14)	Luz G. Magno Manuel, Edgardo, Melchor, Josephine & Camilo Jr.	123 Ildefonso St., St. Martin de Porres, Bacoor, Cavite	Camilo Magno SS#03-1482113-7	February 5, 2004
15)	Violita D. Miranda	Unknown	Felicisimo Miranda SS#03-1277858-3	September 4, 2004
16)	Salustiana H. Miro	Mandaue City	Rogelio B. Miro SS#06-1028055-3	January 4, 2005
17)	Carmelita G. Sabueno	Manticao, Misamis Oriental / P.L. Dy Street, Cauayan, Isabela	Ricardo Sabueno SS#03-4427001-7	November 16, 2004
18)	Joel Paghubasan	Km. 13 Family Compd. Karuhatan, Valenzuela City	Sales Paghubasan SS#03-3131854-2	July 3, 2004
19)	Regina B. San Diego	#38-18 St East, Olongapo City	Eduardo M. San Diego SS#03-1091047-9	December 7, 2003
20)	Clarita B. Sanchez Mervin & Lester Sanchez	179 9th St., Caloocan City	Benito Sanchez SS#03-3924296-6	September 20, 2003
21)	Fely Tamboong	San Nicolas St., Manila	Rafael Tamboong SS#03-3561280-4	September 23, 2004
22)	Eduardo Toribio	Tinajeros, Malabon City	Leoncio Toribio SS#03-1122745-9	August 30, 2004
23)	Nida Bortollo Verano	97-B Mabini Ext., Davao City	Emilio P. Verano SS#09-0625559-3	July 21, 2004

— Nothing Follows —

(PDI - January 29, 2005)

USAID

DISPOSAL SALE

USAID/Manila will conduct a Sealed Bid Sale of used residential and office furniture/equipment, Chevy '98 S-10 Pick-up and Forklift, on an "AS IS-WHERE IS" basis.

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Tables
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Mirrors
Nightstands
Office Stands

Dining Room Furniture
Chest of drawers
Dining Room chairs
Etageres
Bookcases
Swivel Chairs
Filing Cabinets

All items can be inspected on January 31 - February 1, 2005 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m .and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Items can be inspected at USAID Warehouse: 2345 Aurora Blvd., (formerly Tramo St.) Pasay City. Bidforms are available at the site. Submission of bids and cash deposits (20% of the total bid) can be done at the site during the sale. Full payment and bid deposit refund will be done starting February 3, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the USAID/Cashier, 8th Floor, PNB Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City.

For further information, please call Mr. Romy S. Arquisola or Mr. Alfredo Q. Daluz at Tel. Nos. 852-9684, 514-4229, 514-4234 and 514-4236.

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All items can be inspected on January 31 - February 1, 2005 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Items can be inspected at USAID Warehouse: 2345 Aurora Blvd., (formerly Tramo St.) Pasay City (Warehouse is located between EDSA and Airport road next to bridge and PITC.) Bid forms are available at the site. Submission of bids and cash deposits (20% of the total bid) can be done at the site during the sale. Full payment must be made and bid deposit will be refunded from February 2 to February 5, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the USAID/Cashier, 8th Floor, PNB Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City.

For further information, please call Mr. Romy S. Arquisola or Mr. Alfredo Q. Daluz at Tel. Nos. 852-9684, 514-4229, 514-4234 and 514-4236.

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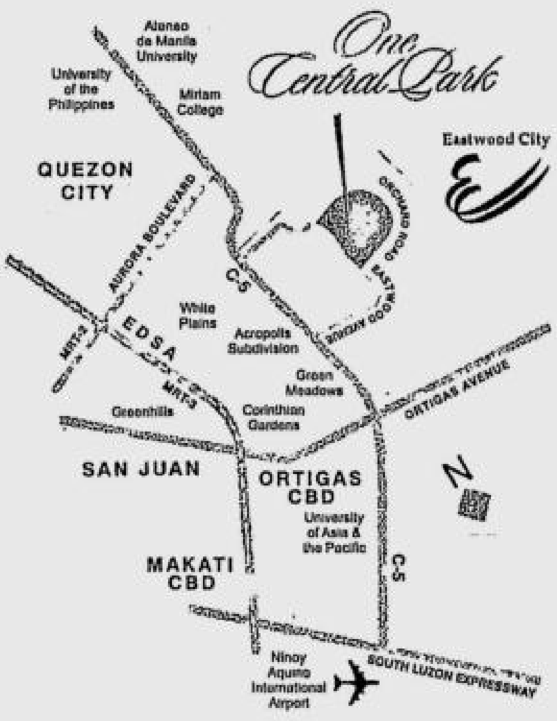
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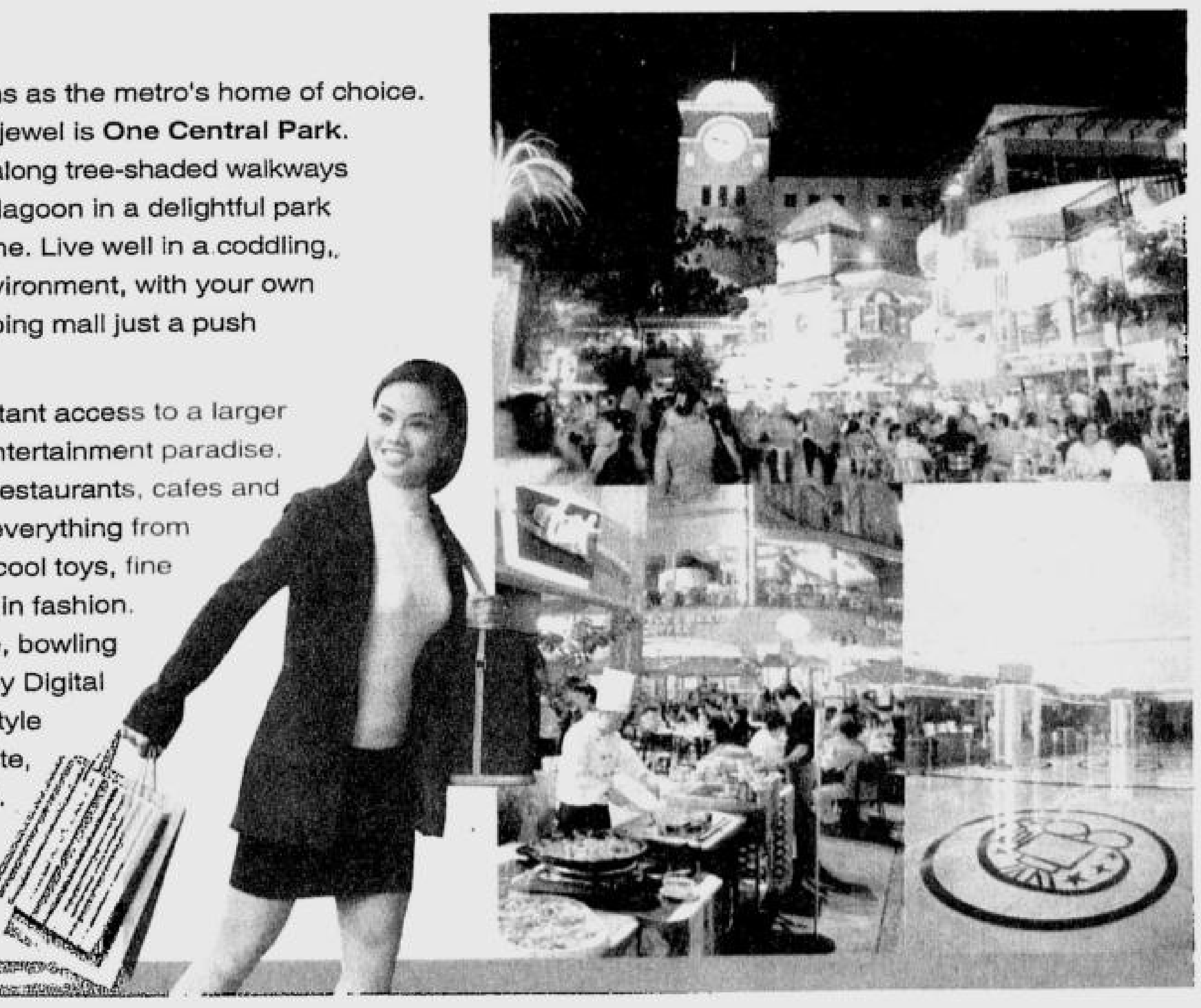

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Home gadget kills airborne disease-causing contaminants

H2O
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ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

By Charles E. Buban

THINK that you don't have to worry about most diseases when you're at home? Think again.

By simply breathing in, household members may be exposed to virus, fungi, allergens and other airborne contaminants that could cause diseases or foul odor.

Sharp (Philippines) Corp. claims they now have an effective solution to this problem with the launch of several of their home appliances that use Plasmacluster Ion technology.

The technology has been incorporated in Sharp home appliances such as air-conditioners, air purifiers, refrigerators, humidifiers, dehumidifiers and vacuum cleaners.

Like what occurs naturally

Plasmacluster Ion technology works the way nature does, according to Sharp.

Sharp AVP and domestic sales division general manager Koji Domoto says the technology discharges streams of positive and negative ions that quickly bond with water molecules in the air to form cluster ions.

Cluster ions exist in abundance in nature, and are completely harmless to people.

When these cluster ions are dispersed around a room by being carried on air currents, they seek out and surround airborne contaminants.

A chemical reaction takes place and the contaminant is rendered harmless, robbing it of its ability to provoke an allergic reaction or disease even if breathed in.

World's first

The technology is said to be the first in the world.

Unlike conventional air purification systems that filter dirty air through the unit, the positive and negative ions generated by the cluster ion system diffuse throughout the entire room at a rate of 5 meters per second.

Domoto explains that as these positive and negative ions aggressively attack airborne contaminants and pollutants, they can quickly and effectively purify the air in every corner of the room.

Developed by Sharp in 2000, the company has worked with leading academic research institutions around the world to verify its effectiveness.

Laboratory experiment

A recent laboratory experiment done at the Kitasato Institute Medical Center Hospital in Tokyo, Japan, verified that the technology can indeed, inactivate the feline corona virus, a member of the *corona viridae* family that has been identified as the culprit behind severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

Their test showed that 99.7 percent of the feline corona virus was rendered inactive within 40 minutes of exposure to plasmacluster ions.

The researchers explained this could be the result of ions damaging the virus by stealing hydrogen from the peplomers, which the virus use to infect other cells.

Prior to this experiment, Sharp says the technology has already been verified to decompose other harmful viruses such as the polio virus, coxsackie virus (that causes colds), flu virus as well as being able to deactivate airborne mite allergens, a common asthma trigger.

BCDA SELLS MORE LAND TO MEGAWORLD
Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) president and CEO Narciso Abaya, second from left, recently signed a supplement for the contract to sell agreement with Megaworld Corp. chair and president Andrew L. Tan, second from right. The signing includes an additional 25,000 square meters of land in the SRDP area of Fort Bonifacio, increasing the total Megaworld purchase of P486.76 million, or a total of 91,820 sq m from an original of 66,820 sq m. The signing was witnessed by BCDA EVP Isaac S. Puno III, far left, and Megaworld EVP lawyer Cirilo L. Manlangit. The BCDA and Megaworld Corp. are also engaged in similar development projects in the area such as McKinley Hills, which is being developed as a high-end residential subdivision with commercial area.

Ayala Greenfield launches new lots

AYALA Greenfield Estates, developed for the family with an active lifestyle, will launch new available lots in Phase 2 in a special open house event on Sunday.

Visitors will experience the many exclusive amenities of the Philippines' only true golf and leisure community. Family members will have the chance to learn the rudiments of golf through a professional golf instructor who will be on hand to teach and assist both amateur and seasoned players alike.

New lots

Guests will also have the opportunity to check out the new lots in Phase 2, which are located near the Arbor Trails area of the site.

These lots offer excellent views of Laguna de Bay, providing future residents' homes with excellent backdrops for daily peaceful communes with nature. View decks, plank bridges and hiking trails also make this new phase unique and more conducive to hours of fun outdoor activities.

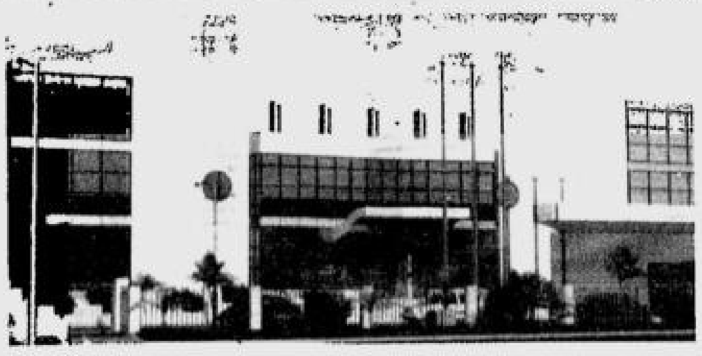
Lot sizes range from 481 to 682 square meters.

Minimal activation fee

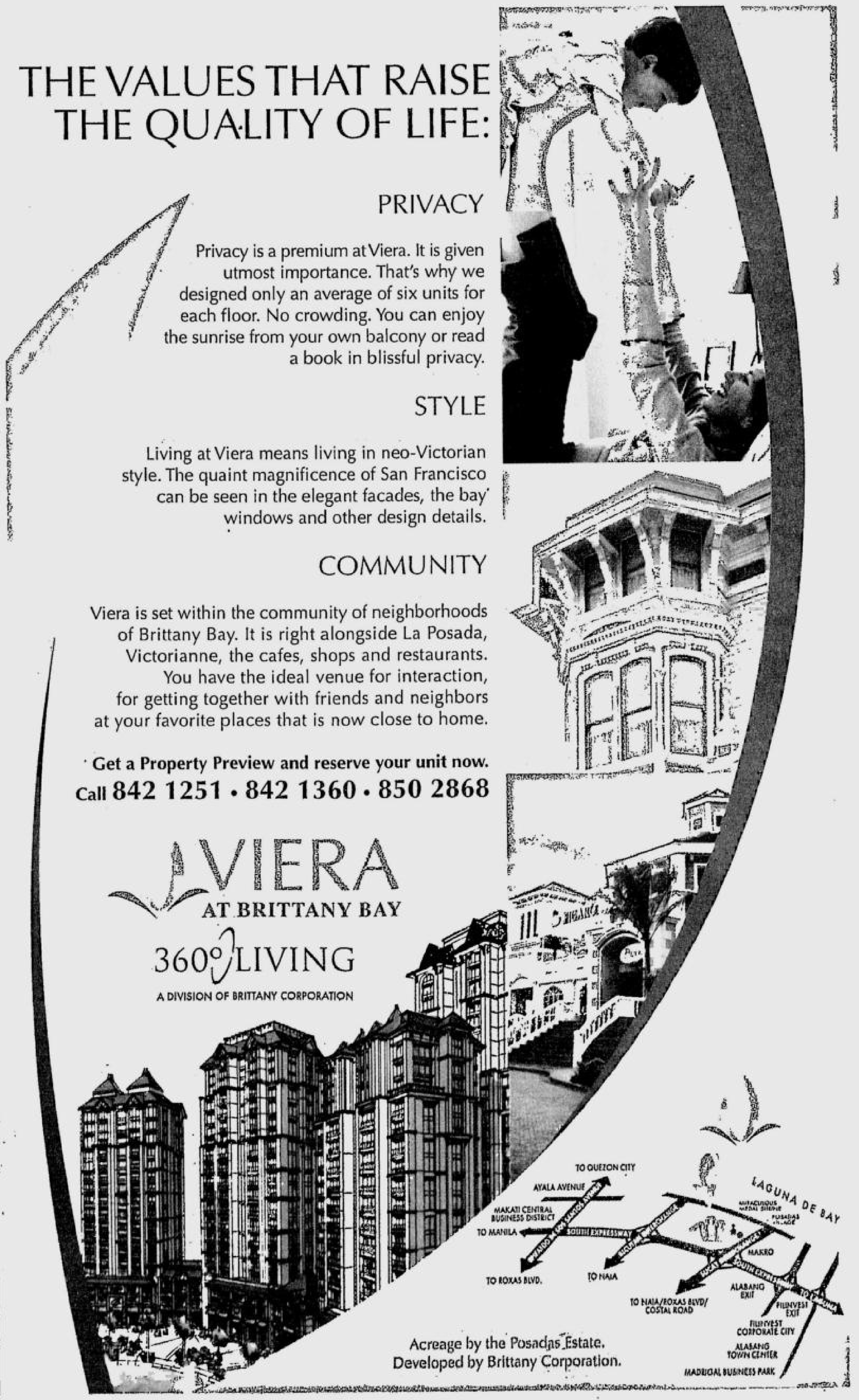
For a minimal activation fee, every lot buyer is entitled to a free share and membership at the Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf & Leisure Club.

From April to June, lot owners can activate their Golf & Leisure Club membership for only P50,000. From July 2005 onward, new fees will apply.

Ayala Greenfield Estates is located in Calamba, Laguna and is a joint venture between Ayala Land Inc. and Greenfield Development Corp. For further details on Ayala Greenfield Estates and the upcoming open house, please call 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or e-mail ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.ph.



WAREHOUSE COMPLEX OPENS IN CALAMBA
EZP Development announces the opening of its warehouse complex project that features advanced fire alarm and fire protection system provided by Water-lite Engineering. The project is located at the Philippine Economic Zone Authority-accredited Calamba Premiere International Park in Barangay Batino.



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Living at Viera means living in neo-Victorian style. The quaint magnificence of San Francisco can be seen in the elegant facades, the bay windows and other design details.

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Viera is set within the community of neighborhoods of Brittany Bay. It is right alongside La Posada, Victorianne, the cafes, shops and restaurants. You have the ideal venue for interaction, for getting together with friends and neighbors at your favorite places that is now close to home.

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The incredible wellness of being

"THE PRESENCE of water, scents, and light is a life-giving force that creates a healthy environment for the mind, body, and spirit."

Fact No 1: Manila has become a city of metrosexuals, a modern term that refers to urban dwellers whose lifestyle puts a high premium on beauty and wellness.

A typical day of a metrosexual might start with rushing to your nearest Starbucks coffee, then heading off to work, going to the gym at break time, unwinding for a glass of beer (or wine, whatever suits your mood!) after office, and just before going home, heeding your body's urgent call to be pampered by visiting your nearby spa. And when the week's finally over, weekend finds us searching for a good deal of escape, a bit of fresh air and a semblance of healthy food. How interesting it is to observe that in these crisis-ridden times, people will pay any price just to feel good.

Fact No. 2: Life used to be a lot simpler. While it may be true that we who live and survive in the metropolis lag behind our more economically well-off neighbors, I can't help but be fascinated with our increasing regard for a real sense of wellness. A wonderful combination of isolation, quiet and comfort seems to be the one elusive luxury we long for. Looking closely at this, I find the presence of water, scents and light to be the life-giving force that constitutes a rich environment for the body, mind and spirit.

INTO SPACE

Pinky Cruz

Indeed, the harmony of these three components of our being defines our wellness.

Water

"Getting horizontal is more relaxing than standing, all the water around you gives off comforting connotations of being in the womb," says Dr. John Harcup, chair of the British Spas Federation's medical advisory board. And this is not only because the human body is made up of 75 percent water but bathing dispels lactic acid from our muscles taking away aches and pains.

That is perhaps why it has taken center stage not only on outdoors but right in the very spaces we love coming back to. The healing and cleansing effect it produces is much recognized by people-oriented environs, namely hotels, restaurants and resorts. Even malls and offices now have to have a semblance of it.

Scents

The power of our sense of smell plays a vital role in our sense of well-being. Even our recollection of a place or event can be attributed to some familiar scent.

The feelings they evoke are so powerful that they can make us feel secure, hungry, (stimulated), creative (and hypnotized). No wonder, it is usually maximized as a tool to condition customers to feel good.

WATER at its most dynamic is given tribute here in a simple spiral stone feature. Ideal for either indoor or outdoor use.

THE AUTHOR in her most relaxed mode and the water environ at its most tranquil presence

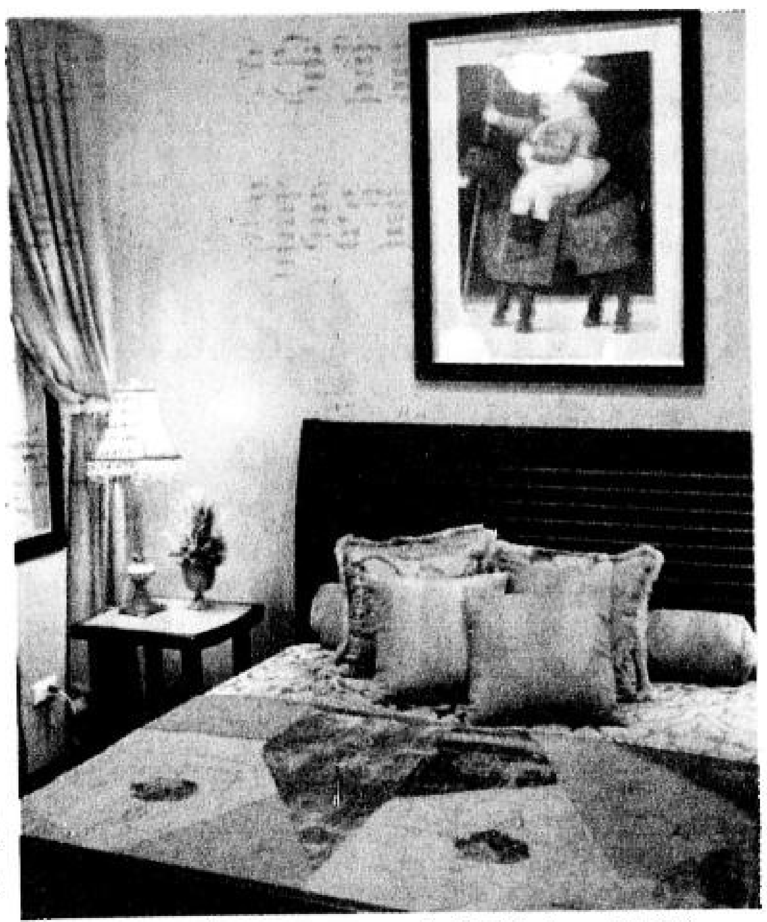
Lighting

The simple truth is: "If you have great lighting in your home, you don't need much else at all—most of what we put into our space is icing, but lighting is part of the cake."

— *Kelly Hoppen*

This is probably the most taken-for-granted piece of advice in creating an atmosphere of wellbeing. Providing different sources of light for any given time of the day can be one's secret weapon in feeling good. Light can be either sexy or pensive, depending on how you package it.

Learn the art of diffusing it behind or above cabinets, to subtly suggest it through fiber-optic source interspersed inside ledges or a piece of art. Light is not only meant to illumine but to give different faces to your surroundings to suit your varied dispositions.



IT only takes a... lamp to get a room glowin'! The hues of bright orange and golds become even more transcendent with the clever use of a sexy beaded table lamp.

Wellness is really about listening to what your body and spirit hunger for. Learning to respond to this need for connection is the greatest breakthrough in man's attempt to design his ideal abode.

Next time you are in your most peaceful, creative state of mind, remember to integrate these three basic elements. My own personal formula for creating the ideal place, where wellness flows like a fountain, smells like an incense and shines like the noonday sun.

* * *

For comments or suggestions, please e-mail me at pinky-cruz@creativepost.com.ph.

Business slams hiked VAT, petroleum tariff, bats for numbers game tax

GIANT business organizations has slammed the government's plan to hike the VAT (value-added tax) and petroleum tariff by 2 percent as "callousness" in the face of widespread poverty and a still-shaky economy, even as they batted for legalization and taxing of *jueteng* (numbers game).

In a joint statement, the Business Against Graft and Corruption (Bagcor) and the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations (Creba) said:

> If government is unable at this time to alleviate the widespread suffering of our people, the least it can do is not aggravate it. To do so would be perceived as callousness.

Another round of price hike

"The planned increase in VAT and tariff on petroleum products will result in debilitating inflation by triggering another round of price increases across the entire economic spectrum.

"At this time when the gap between family income and cost of living has widened to near intolerable proportion, when markets have been in a state of depression for years due to extremely low purchasing power, when businesses have been either retrenching or closing shop for lack of relief from spiraling production costs, such a move would only bring catastrophe.

"There is even serious doubt that these measures would indeed result in increased collections for government. More likely, the increased VAT's adverse impact on prices would compel collusion between buyer and seller to evade the tax by not issuing official receipts. Consequently, government may expect an actual decrease not only in VAT collections but also in income tax collection.

"Increased petroleum tariff would be an additional incentive to smuggling, technical or otherwise, and as such would similarly result in reduced collections.

Tax 'jueteng'

"To our mind, government would do better to legalize and tax *jueteng* instead, as this would generate more than triple the P54 billion projected to be collected from the increased VAT and petroleum tariff combined.

"In the process it will hurt no one, as a tax on *jueteng* will have no impact whatsoever on prices of goods and services.

"There are two *jueteng* draws per day in some 45,000 barangays throughout the country. Assuming *jueteng* operators collect at least P20,000 per draw, a 25 percent tax on *jueteng* collections per draw would contribute to government some P450 million daily, or P164 billion annually.

"A registration/franchise tax on *jueteng* operators, at the rate of P10 per head of population in the franchise area, would contribute an additional P800 million annually, which may be set aside to cover administration and regulatory costs.

"The measure could be implemented in no time. All that would be necessary is to immediately require existing *jueteng* operators nationwide to register and apply for franchise and operating permits, impose a franchise tax based on local population data, and subject them to a fixed tax of, say, P5,000 per draw.

"*Jueteng* legalization would not only contribute billions to both local and national coffers, but would also eliminate a major source of graft and corruption, improve the quality of governance, and regain for government the faith of the governed.

"It will dispel the entrenched suspicion that the real reason government has so far desisted from subjecting *jueteng* to regulation and taxation, is because the large majority of legislators and officials in the executive branch from the highest to the lowest level owe the *jueteng* lords their political and economic fortunes.

"Just as importantly, legalization will place *jueteng* within the ambit of government scrutiny and regulation, thereby allowing for the institution of measures to protect bettors from fraud and exploitation by *jueteng* lords.

Immoral

"Government has 'long legalized—and has profited immensely from—casino, sweepstakes, jai-alai, lotto and cockfighting. To our mind, therefore, its rationale for continuing to ban *jueteng*—i.e. that it is gambling and thus immoral—appears hypocritical, even as it discriminates against the poor by favoring and openly encouraging the rich man's form of gambling.

"If government truly finds gambling immoral, then it should ban not just *jueteng* but casino, sweepstakes, jai-alai, lotto, cockfighting and all other forms of gambling as well. Consistency and decency dictate no less."

THE LIVING room of one of the model units at The Shang Grand Tower.

Grand offering from Shang Grand Tower

WITH ONLY a few units available for sale, The Shang Grand Tower extends a grand offer on their two-bedroom units.

For a limited period, buyers can enjoy their interest-free in-house financing package and a free appliance package when they purchase a two-bedroom unit.

Features

The Shang Grand Tower's two-bedroom units feature a minimum of about 130 square meters of livable space, high-ceiling, big windows for relaxed gracious living.

Every bedroom has its own elegantly designed toilet and bath and there is also a separate guest powder room. Each unit's modern kitchen equipped with double sink, seamless countertops with hanging and undercounter cabinets plus windows that swing open to let out steamy air and food odor. There is a maid's quarters with its own toilet and bath and a free parking slot.

The 46-story five-star Shang Grand Tower is located on Dela Rosa street in Legazpi Village. It is walking distance to the Makati business district and Greenbelt, Glorietta and the Ayala Museum.

Amenities

Special amenities will include two stylish lobby areas, a fully equipped gym and fitness area, adult and children's swimming pools, banquet rooms and concierge service.

Residents can also enjoy catering and seven-day laundry services from nearby Makati Shangri-La Hotel.

The Shang Grand Tower which is due for completion in late 2005 will have its topping off ceremonies on Feb. For more information, please call 811-1819 or 811-0556 or visit www.theshanggrandtower.com.

Don't risk costly damage to your gutter system

YOU could have the most beautiful roof, sliding design and doors, but more often than not, you're going to see an odd, dirty-looking, sagging portion commonly known as fascia or senepa.

Never noticed it before? Maybe that's because you don't particularly take notice of a component called "senepa," and where you could find it in the house.

Senepa is the flat, horizontal board along the eaves of the house that channels rainwater away from the outside walls, keeping them whole and dry. One that has warped and rotted ultimately means that, unless you act swiftly, you and your family will be at the mercy of these elements.

HardiFlexSenepa

HardiFlexSenepa fiber cement fascia boards, manufactured by James Hardie, are durable and versatile alternatives to common wood senepa. They are made of a combination of cement, sand and cellulose fibers, and come in a variety of widths and thickness designed to suit the requirements of different housing types.

HardiFlexSenepa durable cement fascia boards require little maintenance and are easy to install. Unlike wood, the commonly used material for fascia, they are resistant to fire, water and termites, eliminating the need for replacements every few years. If HardiFlex, the flagship James Hardie brand, is considered the standard in internal wall and ceiling applications, the thicker and longer HardiFlexSenepa durable cement fascia boards are seen to fill the need for tough and durable senepa boards.

Durability, versatility

With the durability and versatility offered by HardiFlexSenepa durable cement fascia boards, you can forget all about your senepa once you install it.

Homeowners are advised to invest in a long-term solution to problem senepa, taking into consideration that this component of the house is often one of the first to display the wear and tear wreaked by the elements.

Rest and recreation at The Village Sports Club

THE NAREL Group of Companies, the developer of the posh Carmel Heights Royale Village in Cavite, recently broke ground for its latest development, The Village Sports Club.

Located at the heart of Topman Village in BF Homes, Parañaque, this exclusive sports and recreation center is the ideal venue for young professionals and families residing in the Parañaque, Las Piñas and Sucat areas.

Easily accessible, it's an idyllic setting for indulging oneself in a weekend of lavish pampering through an array of activities without the hassle of long distance driving.

Recreational amenities

Nestled on a sprawling 18,500 square-meter property, The Village Sports Club boasts of world-class amenities suited to satisfy every family member's needs. Health buffs and sports enthusiasts will have a ball with the club's 12 indoor badminton courts, four indoor tennis courts, two squash courts, an indoor-basketball court, a 25-meter swimming pool, fitness gym, jogging path, wall climbing and boxing ring.

THE VILLAGE Sports Club groundbreaking ceremony held recently in Topman Village, BF Homes Parañaque, is graced by Oriental Mindoro Rep. Amelita Villarosa (center) with (from left) club members Laya Martigan, Dalupan Association president Wilfredo Araneta and Napoleon Henry Garcia. The Village Sports Club Ventures Inc. president Christian Relova, VP Christopher Narciso, United BF Homeowners Association president Col. Rolando Navarro, project architect Michael Angelo Liwanag and Anthony Villarosa.

Kids will definitely enjoy the kiddie pool, playground, playroom and the computer network gaming amenities.

The Village Sports Club also offers respite for individuals seeking much-needed rest with a spa, massage rooms and meditation and pocket gardens.

For social gatherings and special events like wedding receptions and birthday parties, four function rooms can be converted into one large ballroom while a conference room is made available for meetings and other small functions.

Club opening

Club members will soon enjoy all of these when the club opens its doors in 2006.

With all the recreational amenities suited to fit the discriminating tastes and lifestyles of their Club members, The Village Sports Club is sure to cause a lot of wide-eyed grins early next year.

Sculptures, paintings, photographs and plants

By Dianne M. Villafuerte

Artwork and plants can have a significant effect on a room

BEING the esthetic beings that we are, we are constantly in the search of ways on how to beautify our homes—or workplaces—more. You've already got the right color and lighting schemes and still you're restless about how your house looks.

So finding yourself at a dead-end you resort to, granting that you have the resources for it, art pieces. Most of us find ourselves at a crossroads when it comes to how to decorate our homes especially when it involves sculptures, paintings or photographs.

Sculptures

Feng shui practitioner Zaihong Shen tells us that in feng shui theory, sculptures are viewed as either "harsh" or "soft." "Harsh" sculptures are those made of metal, bone or rock which are sharply angled. On the other hand, macramé hangings, fabric dolls and some types of earthenware or rounded wood pieces are considered "soft" sculptures.

Harsh sculptures are believed to have an aggressive nature so Shen advises against placing these inside bedrooms as these might have a significant effect on sleep. Soft sculptures, however, can be placed just about anywhere. But Shen also cautions that soft sculptures, having a yin nature, may add too much yin energy to a yin environment like the bathroom.

Paintings or photographs

The Chinese do not only consider whether a painting or photograph matches the room's other decor or color theme, they give more importance to the subject of the painting or photograph. Feng shui theory believes what is on the artwork has an effect on its surroundings. Do not be surprised if you will see paintings or photographs of fish, butterflies or mountains in a Chinese household for these symbolize wealth, long life, and ambition and support, respectively.

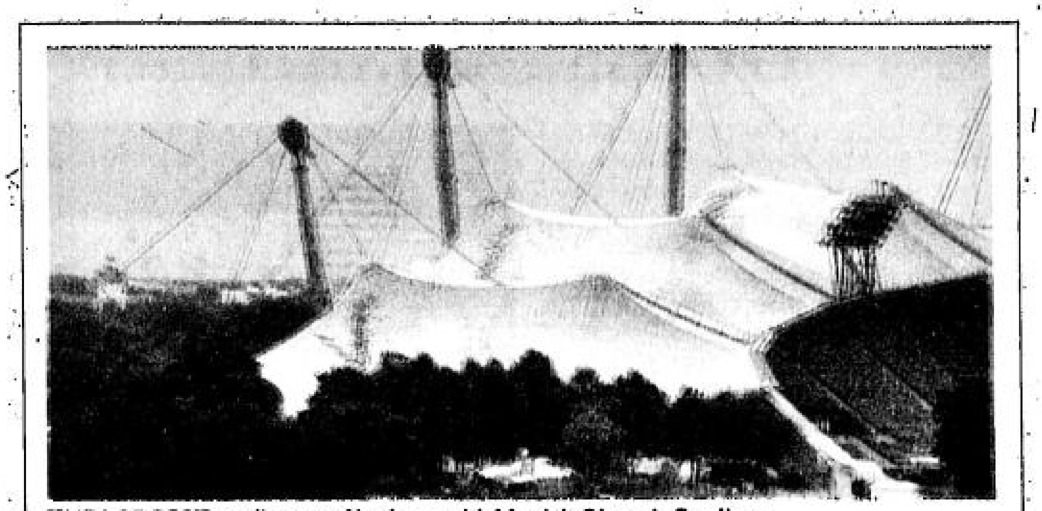
Shen also believes that pictures cause a particular mood to a room. A dreamlike picture, for example, may make a person want to sleep.

Plants

We need not look only at art pieces when it comes to decorating our homes. Plants make an ideal decor, plus feng shui practitioners believe that these carry favorable chi because these give off oxygen and are living organisms. (Added to that, we are presented with more options since many plants also come cheap and may just be found outside your—or your neighbor's—home.) Shen reminds us though that we must be careful in choosing which plant will best suit every room. A plant which does not need too much light may just wilt faster than you can say "feng shui" if placed by a window with abundant sunlight. It is most important to make sure that the plants inside your home are healthy and in good condition.

As in furniture, art pieces and plants also have to be in accordance to the room's size. A large sculpture may give a claustrophobic impression to a small room while a lonesome, tiny piece, on the other hand, can be distracting to the overall energy of the room.

Likewise, a small potted plant is unnoticeable and may be insignificant to a large room while a a potted bamboo may crowd a small bathroom. Shen also tells us to consider the shape of the plant since this is also vital. A room with many pieces of tall, angular furniture may need a low and rounded plant. A room with low, rounded furniture should have a long and tall plant.



THE LARGEST stadium roof in the world: Munich Olympic Stadium

All under one roof

AMAZING STRUCTURES

THE MUNICH Olympic Stadium's transparent acrylic glass "tent" has an area of 85,000 square meters or 915,000 square feet, making it to the Guinness World Records as having the largest stadium roof.

Located in Munich, Germany, where the tragic 1972 Summer Olympics was held, the initially highly controversial Munich Olympic Stadium has a seating capacity of 69,000. Through the years, it has become an internationally acclaimed architectural symbol of the modern city of Munich and of a new and democratic Germany.

Unlike other stadiums, the roof of the Munich Stadium is in tension, its weight carried by a prestressed cable net curved in two directions to stabilize it in the wind. The transparent stadium roof is suspended from 12 steel pylons, extending over all three structures—the stadium, the Olympic Hall and the swimming hall. *Dianne M. Villafuerte*

Cathay Land invests ₱5.25B, creates new city

LEADING real estate developer Cathay Land has embarked on its most ambitious, biggest project to date: the 250-hectare South Forbes Golf City strategically located in the booming Sta. Rosa-Silang-Tagaytay business and commercial hub.

Cathay Land president Jeffrey Ng said they are set to invest P5.25 billion to make the masterplanned self-sustaining satellite city come to life in the next couple of years. "We have tapped only the best talents in the country for this project to ensure its success," he noted.

Exclusive enclaves

One by one, Cathay Land will develop South Forbes' exclusive residential enclaves: the Zen-like Bali, Kyoto and Phuket Mansions; the Mediterranean-inspired Villas; the Victorian-themed Oxford Manors; the luxurious condominium buildings of Miami Towers; and the Country Chateaus, which offer expansive views of South Forbes' very own 80-hectare golf course.

To attract multinationals and investors to this new city, Cathay Land will also develop ultramodern, sleek office buildings at the South Forbes Cyberpark. These office buildings will be designed to host topnotch telecommunications and technology facilities to suit the demanding requirements of call centers and business process outsourcing firms.

Center for higher learning

With South Forbes' Harvard Square hosting the city's very own university belt, Sta. Rosa now becomes the center for higher learning south of Metro Manila. Top schools such as Ateneo, La Salle, Brent and St. Scholastica's are already operating in the area. South Forbes is also home to Learning Links, Asia's first environmental school.

Other areas within this self-sustaining city have been set aside in the masterplan for a business district to rise along South Boulevard—the City's main avenue—and various entertainment, dining and shopping choices in the South Forbes Citywalk.

With areas for business, sports, leisure, education and residences all being a short walk away in South Forbes Golf City, Cathay Land can now boast of setting the bar even higher for developers to design projects that can entice investors, business locators and homeowners.

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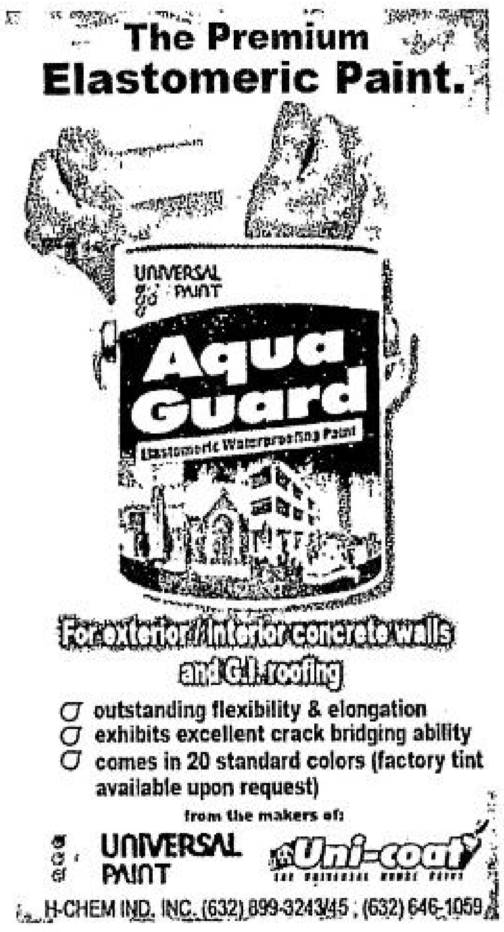
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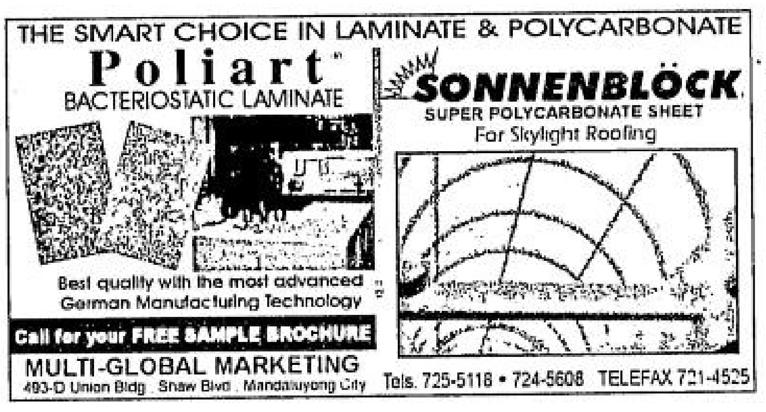
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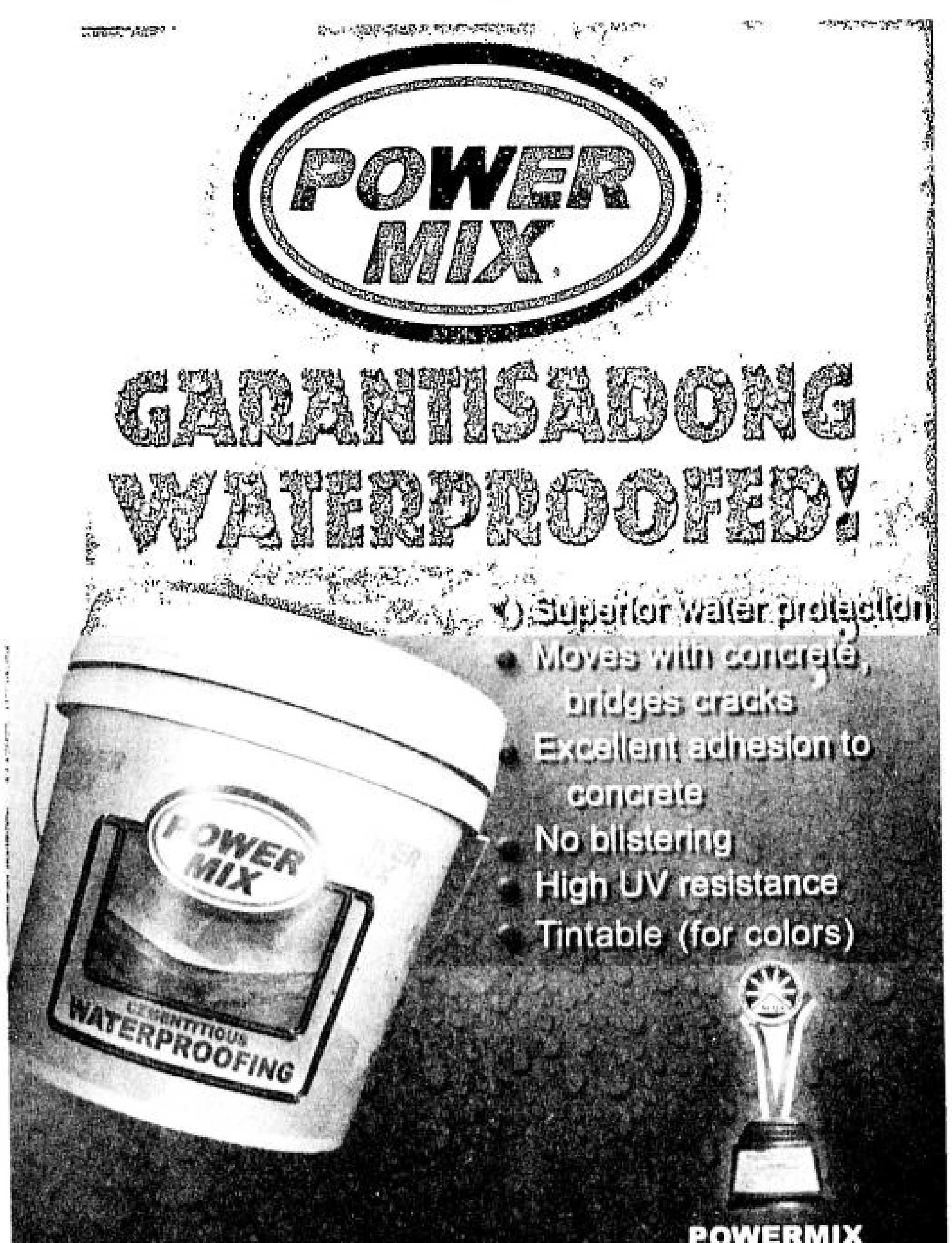
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Decks: Maximizing outdoor space

IN CITIES today, the cost of real estate has soared. To make housing more affordable, developers have made lot cuts smaller and smaller. In some cases, houses and buildings have completely occupied the entire lot, giving birth to the "zero lot" concept.

Garden space has become a luxury. But aren't there any alternatives open to us? Should this stop us from enjoying the outdoors? I think not.

Underutilized part

There is a part of every house that remains underutilized ... the roof. The roof area approximates the building footprint in size. It is designed to be sturdy enough to protect us from the elements. It is generally unobstructed and unused. It is, therefore, a prime candidate for reinvention—to serve a greater purpose! Why not?

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

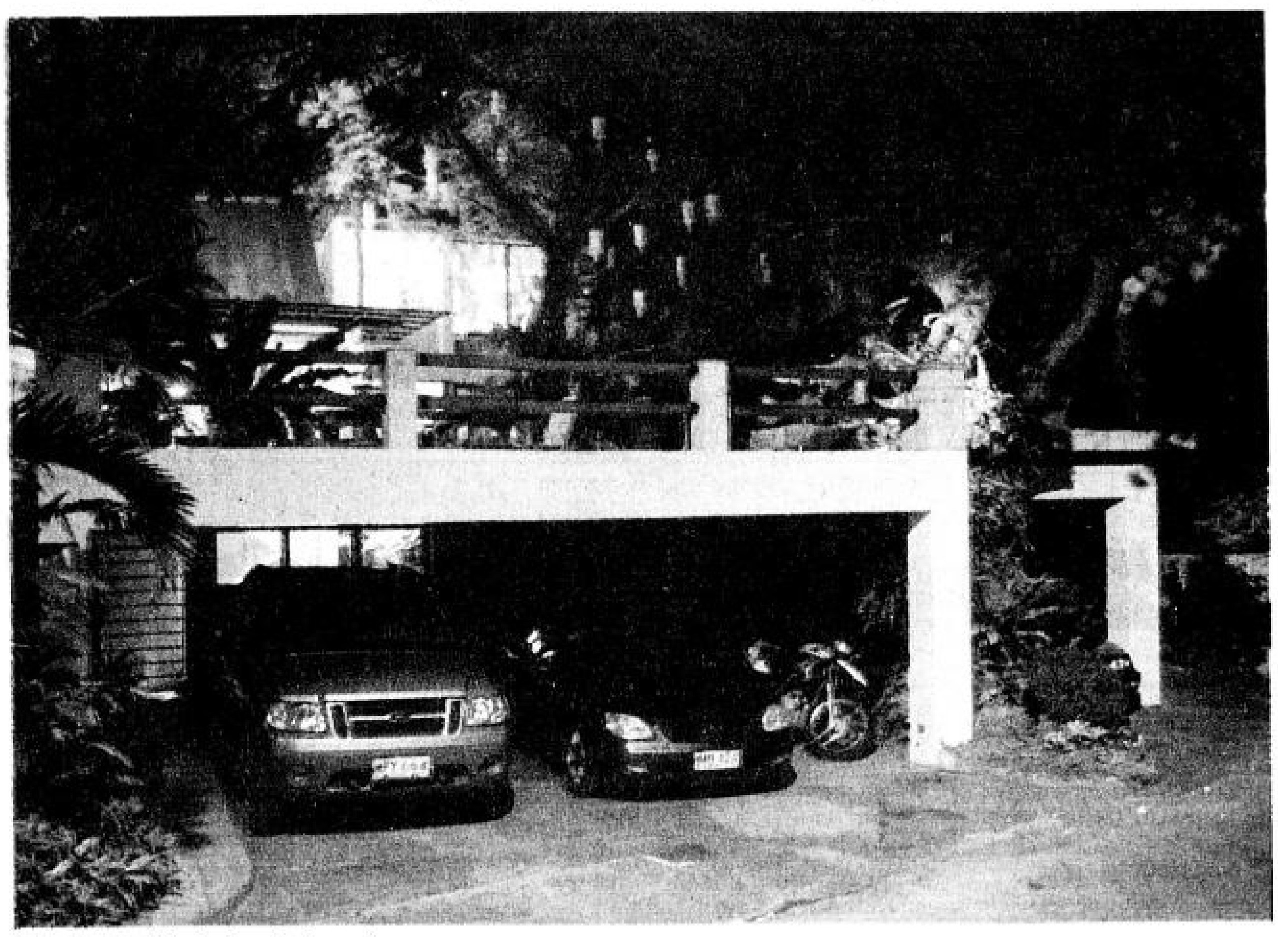
Marcos de Guzman Jr.

The roof of a house, regardless of size, could be designed as a roof deck for additional floor space. It can have a variety of functions. It may nobly serve as laundry and drying area. It may be used as an entertainment and party area. It may be furnished with an endless choice of outdoor furniture, plants and sport accessories.

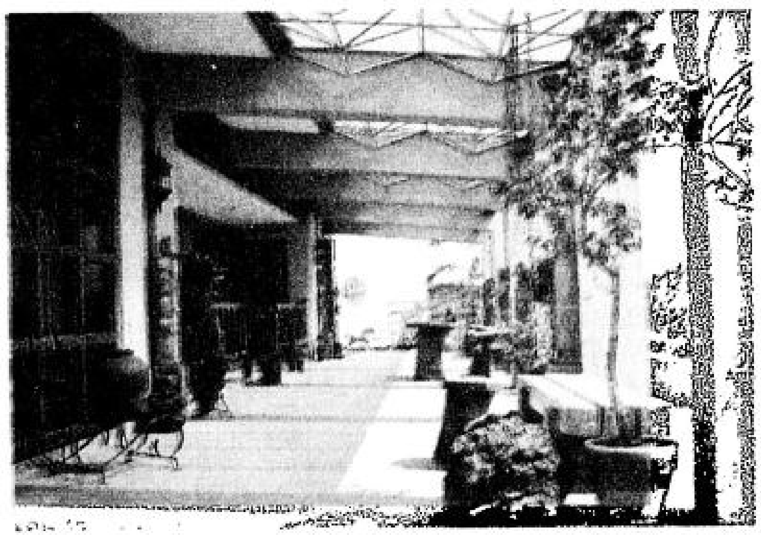
For those with a more sophisticated lifestyle, the roof deck may be beautifully landscaped into an oasis, literally "above it all." There are a variety of plants that would grow on decks. Sometimes even fruit trees could thrive. You could add a bar, a barbecue grill, water features, jacuzzis, pools, teak furniture, canvas umbrellas, water cooling misters ... an endless array of leisure equipment.

Leakproof deck

In our country, where cement is the building material of choice, decks are not difficult to construct. Although problems regarding leaks, drainage and waterproofing do exist, several very viable solutions abound. A well-designed deck is just as leakproof as a well-designed roof. Expensive waterproofing is not a must; it is only a second line of defense.



MY personal deck placed above the garage



A CONCEPTUAL rendition of a mixed-use development with residential lofts above retail areas, and a central park. Privacy is achieved by having separate access for residential and retail areas.

The secret of a leakproof deck is in establishing the proper slope and drainage, combined with an adequately reinforced monolithic slab. The cost of constructing a deck is not daunting, even when compared to its tin roof counterpart, especially if you consider the benefits and advantages it offers.

Other advantages

Apart from the benefit of space, here are some more advantages:

- It insulates the rest of your house better than a tin roof would.
- It conforms to most building height requirements.
- With it, you can create more distinctive house forms and designs.
- You acquire a better view and perhaps fresher air.
- Stargazing is likewise a bonus.

Other advantages include expandability. With a roof deck, it is easy to add another floor later on without inconveniencing the occupants of the lower floor. It can even be constructed during the rainy season, since a slab is already in place. It is also generally safer.

THE ROOF deck above the Dormitoriana building in Loyola Heights, Q.C.

2 decks

My personal deck is placed above the garage. In this case, instead of putting a roof, a deck made more sense. Now I have extra living space to entertain and relax. It has turned into one of the most useful parts of the house. The trees around actually sprouted from ground level and were trimmed to complement the upper deck.

For a cooler effect, I added a number of water features that run across the deck. I installed an automatic irrigation system to reduce maintenance in watering the plants. Instead of having regular railings, I chose water barriers and simple wooden railings to complete the relaxed effect.

The roof deck above the Dormitoriana building in Loyola Heights, Quezon City, is owned by my father. We've had great uses for it since it was built last year. Now, it includes a gym, pool table, music lounge and a spa. We discovered that we prefer this area than the lower garden.

The same kind of deck may be placed above most houses, regardless of size. In fact, the smaller the lot, the more you would need one. So, even if you are not the outdoorsy type, reclaiming a space like this to suit your need could be a pleasant surprise!

Somehow, with a roof deck, the sky seems bigger and the stars more within your grasp. It could make you feel like you're on top of the world!

* * *

E-mail the author at arkinet@email.com.ph.

360° Living launches Vittoria model home at Trails of La Marea

TRAILS of La Marea by 360° Living, the new corporate division of real estate maverick Brittany Corp., is a community fit for young urban achievers in search of an abode to suit their unique lifestyle and cultivated tastes.

This is a welcoming American ranch-inspired village boasting of limited collection of home and lot packages.

New model home

La Marea recently inaugurated a new model home called Vittoria, its largest with a floor area of 188 sq m on 180-sq-m-lot. It exudes distinct innovations in architecture and design and beckons a relaxed ambiance with exteriors painted in pastel hues. White picket fences and lower walls festooned with stone claddings add the character of an American ranch.

VITTORIA'S dining room

Inspired by the Parisian Slier, the Vittoria interiors exude a crisp look of unparalleled style and chic character. Noted interior designer, Pinky Cruz of Creative Post, blends distinct elements to create a home of fashionable comfort. The living and dining area maximizes the available space, providing the perfect site for impressive social dinners or wonderful family gatherings. A large kitchen with a connecting bar area can also house the complete amenities for preparing scrumptious feasts.

The master's bedroom has its own toilet and bath and walk-in closet. A second bedroom also has its own toilet and bath while a third one can be converted into a den or guest room. The Vittoria also has a balcony, family hall, powder room and a maid's room with its own toilet and bath. Its interiors combine old and new French furnishings with muted shades, conveying a sense of style while providing utmost comfort.

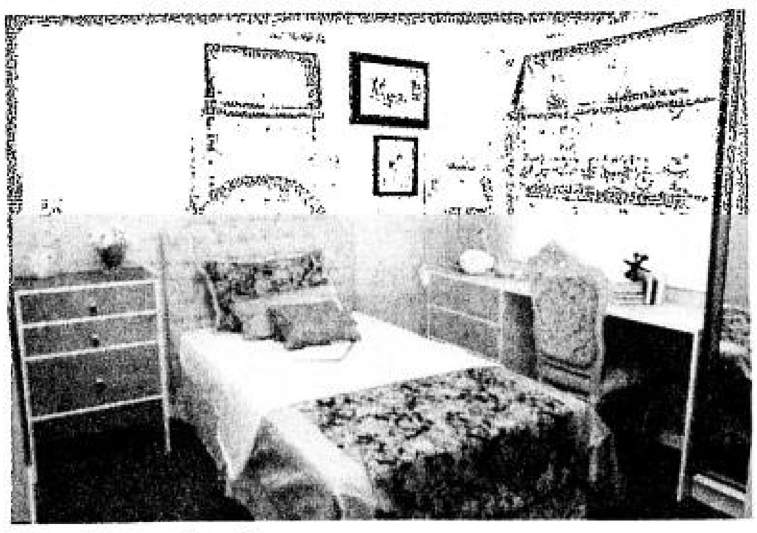
Future residents may choose to reside in the Ungiolley and Alexandra, two other home models of Trails of La Marea.

5 philosophies

La Marea's ideal environment is built on the insight that raising children defines residents' needs, lifestyle and priorities according to 360° Living's five philosophies:

- **Intelligent use of space.** Intelligent space planning shows how "more can be done with less," giving each home a feeling of being bigger than its actual floor area.
- **Shelter around activity.** Each area of a home is designed with family activities in mind, promoting harmonious interaction.
- **Multifunctionality** Rooms are designed for more than one function. The family room, for example, can serve as a guest area, or for reading, music or watching TV.
- **Space of one's own.** Homes have individual spaces for every family member, be it a quiet corner for mom, a mini work space for dad, or a hideaway for a child.
- **Interior views.** Thoughtfully located windows look out onto delightful vistas, with natural light emphasizing the sense of space within.

VITTORIA model house at Trails of La Marea



VITTORIA'S girl's bedroom

Facilities

Leisure and athletic facilities await residents of La Marea. The Fern Garden, which will soon feature a butterfly sanctuary, mist and a pond, will be accessible via a hanging footbridge.

There will also be a clubhouse with swimming pool, basketball court and covered badminton court, leaving no need to go out of the community for recreation and relaxation.

Trails of La Marea is a quaint enclave that is "city-close," removed yet not remote, situated right on the newly opened San Pedro Interchange on South Luzon Expressway in Laguna—a mere 10 minutes away from Alabang.

The Vittoria at Trails of La Marea is priced at P6.5 million. Previews may be arranged by calling 360° Living at 842-0436, 850-2868 and 842-1251.

Lectures on how-tos of property development set this month

MANY new developers are not aware or simply ignore the fact that property development involves a series of important phases that should be methodically studied and evaluated to insure the success of the development project. Of particular importance is knowledge of the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board rules because approval of subdivision and development plans by the governing agencies is one major requirement that must be met by a land developer

Failure to follow the HLURB rules can be a very expensive learning experience on the part of the developer when the plans prepared do not conform to the standards prescribed by the government rules and regulations.

In this regard, the Urban Institute of Real Estate is inviting upcoming and current developers, professionals and property owners to a seminar on "Property Development and HLURB Rules and Regulations" that will be conducted on Feb. 17, from 1:30 to 6:00 p.m. at the AIM Conference Center (AIM-Acceed), Benavidez cor. Trasierra streets, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Topics

The lecture topics will include property development as a business; why not everybody are property developers; phases of property development; evaluating land potential; when you should not invest in vacant land; feasibility criteria; evaluating economic feasibility; needed government permits and licenses; notes on land development and housing construction; development costs; marketing and subdivision management; notes on industrial, commercial and condominium developments and others.

Included is a two-hour lecture on HLURB rules that includes latest updates on the minimum standards and important provisions of Presidential Decree 957, Batas Pambansa 220, Republic Act 6552 (Maceda Law), implementing rules of RA 7279 (Lina Law) and related issues on subdivision development such as transactions exempt from license to sell, noncompletion of developments, turnover or donation of roads and parks and playground, organization of homeowners associations, and registration of real estate dealers.

Other seminars

Urban is also conducting other seminars which can be attended separately, on the same time and venue as follows: Feb. 16—Investing in Real Estate: Opportunities, Techniques and What are Needed to Learn before Investing; Feb. 19—Joint Ventures and Syndications for Real Estate Projects; Feb. 21—Property Management and Real Estate Appraisal; Feb. 22—A Complete Course on Installment Sales; Feb. 23—How to Start and Manage A Successful Real Estate Brokerage Company; Feb. 24—Legal Aspect of Sale, Mortgage and Lease with Contract Documentation and Registration; Feb. 25—Taxation Aspects of Real Estate Transactions and Property Assessment; and Feb. 26—Mathematics of Real Estate Investment

For other details, interested parties may call the Urban Institute at 681-0928 or 0916-4269174 or e-mail urbanet@pacific.net.ph.

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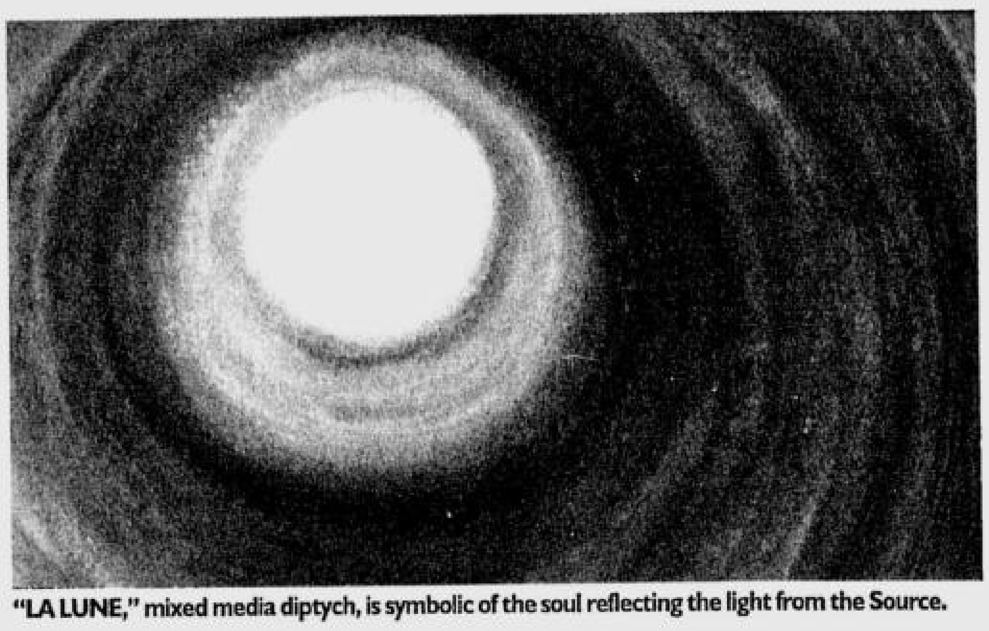

"LA LUNE," mixed media diptych, is symbolic of the soul reflecting the light from the Source.

RUFINO engaged in a painting, aptly called "Passion."

PHOTO BY PATRICK DE KOENIGSWARTER

Marivic, the maverick—artist and modern sage

By Marge C. Enriquez

WITH FELINE grace, Marivic Rufino walks into the restaurant in her signature outfit—tailored separates with subtle trimmings and, for accessories, dark glasses and pearls.

She is always punctual.

She orders her usual cup of hot water, picks a salad and a modest dessert of macaroons, and mulls burning the calories by horseback riding. This regimen, on top of genetics, keeps her young. Another secret of her youthful outlook is a passion for painting.

Before she turns 53 this April, Marivic is set to hold her 14th solo exhibit, "Luminescence-Dreamscapes 2005" from Feb. 21 to 28 at the Peninsula Manila.

Her last exhibit was mounted in 2001. Painting took a back seat in the past three years as she played the dutiful wife to Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael "Paeng" Buenaventura. "I had to stay in the background and let him shine. I did not want to do anything that would compete with that," she says.

Meanwhile, she started working on outdoor murals during visits to their weekend getaway in Batangas. She paints outdoors, exposed to the sun and rain, and never minds getting soiled up.

She explains: "Internally, I'm liberating myself. I used to be very careful; my paintings were very pale. The only time I let go is when I paint abstract. I've been doing large-scale interpretations of simple techniques for sunsets and dawns. The process [proved to be] a physical exercise but it was fun. Paeng would take my picture at every step. He'd carry a big umbrella and shield me from the sun. Sometimes we're interactive. I taught him how to prime the canvas."

> 'Man is a tiny peg in the grand scheme of things. We're nothing, unless we do something meaningful'

"Luminescence-Dreamscapes" will introduce square formats to show panoramas, symbolic impressions of nature and subtleties of light. They are a homage to the Eternal Light. Some of the images will be translated into furniture and accessories. The truth in her paintings—depicted in the brush stroke, the forms, the color harmonies and the quality of light—are reflections of her convictions.

Why not 'Maverick'

Born Regina Maria Victoria , she prefers the monicker "Maverick" instead of Marivic because she is proud of her uniqueness, not in the egotistical sense, but because she feels it is her right to not feel psychic pressure in any crowd. She respects people for who they are, she says, and maintains that her own identity is never compromised.

From age 15 until her 40s, Marivic did a lot of modelling and was photographed in numerous magazines. In her time, she was the It Girl, known for the requisite standards of beauty, brains and breeding. However, she was oblivious to her popularity.

"As far as I was concerned, I was doing my own thing and wasn't paying much attention to labels. It wasn't deliberate; I was just being me," she recalls.

In the late '70s she joined the family business, Mercedes Realty Corporation, as treasurer. She soon wanted bigger challenges. She set up her own production company, worked at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and became banquet manager and, eventually, public relations manager, of Hotel Intercontinental Manila.

After eight years, the long hours of hotel work burned her out. At 40, she got a new lease on life. She rejoined the family business, and took on consultancies and charity work.

She notes that the difference between 40s and 50s is minimal: "In your 40s you become comfortable in your own skin. You know who you are, what you want and, more important, what you don't want. That's when you start [sifting through] the baggage. That's a long process and can last through your 50s. It's called the 'inner journey.' When you hit a certain milestone, you come to the realization that you want to develop yourself more fully. You become more spiritual. You don't need all the trimmings anymore."

Deeper meaning

Being more mature, one appreciates the essential things better, Marivic says. "It could be a walk in the park, lying on the beach and watching the sunset, seeing a rainbow—whatever makes the child in you emerge. You learn to value time, friendships, and relationships. Everything takes a deeper meaning."

Although friends describe her as "sweet" and "ladylike," she occasionally injects subtle sarcasm in her newspaper (BusinessWorld) column. Once she described the six-hour wait to get a driver's license at the Land Transportation Office. After she wrote about her not-so-pleasant experience in Naia 2—going through 11 queues from check-in to boarding, having to use decrepit restrooms—other newspapers wrote more scathing articles on the subject.

The columns reveal that Marivic chooses to abide by the law like any good citizen. When they go on official trips, Marivic and her husband eschews the VIP entrance and exit. "We queue, and people see us. It's better that way. Being in government is temporary. You don't want to get used to the perks. We want to be treated like everybody else," she says.

She once wrote a series that parodied the ways of *arrivistes*, the *nouveau riche* and newly arrived politicians, who show off their power. Ironically, Marivic notes, that the people whom these *arrivistes* aim to dazzle are hardly ever impressed.

Transcendence

"When I'm in a social or business function, I am more of the observer rather than the participant. I'm there, but not really there. I don't want to be sucked into it. I grew up in a social environment, but ever since I was a little girl, I've always been detached. I don't like to be part of the crowd. I want to be myself always."

Her true self, Marivic stresses, is the artist living a life based on self-awareness and the gracefulness of giving. Her paintings convey a token of the soul—an element of transcendence.

Says she: "My paintings are nature themes and abstractions of nature. There are no people in them because I'm always surrounded by people. For me, the ideal state is meaningful solitude, not loneliness. The loneliest thing is to be with other people and still feel alone," she says.

Marivic admits that she has undergone such a state, and describes it: "It could be in a relationship that's lonely. It's time to get out. You could be with a bunch of friends that you've outgrown, but because you have to stay with them. I'm beyond that now. I've moved on. I'm more discerning about who I want to spend quality time with. I go out of my way with friends who'll always be there for me and they know I'll always be there for them through the ups and downs of life. But that doesn't take away my desire for fun."

The Chinese influence, wherein the subjects are miniscule against a vast landscape, are evident in her works. "I like to paint nature unstudied or unsullied," the artist says. "It's an idealized state. In most of my paintings, I hardly ever draw a human figure. Just one tiny man. That's on purpose. Man is only a tiny peg in the grand scheme of things. We are part of nature. We're practically nothing unless we do something meaningful in this world. It's been an conscious and unconscious effort to portray the smallness of man. I find modern living egocentric and I see it all around me. It turns me off."

> 'If you want to have a good time, it doesn't have to be publicized. I think flaunting is not politically correct'

She points to the society pages which are splashed with photos of media hounds and celebrities who became famous for schmoozing. "I don't want to put down anyone. They like to see themselves there. I feel people are trying too hard to show that they're enjoying life, but I think it's so contrived. If you want to have a good time, it doesn't have to be publicized. I think flaunting is not politically correct."

What matters most

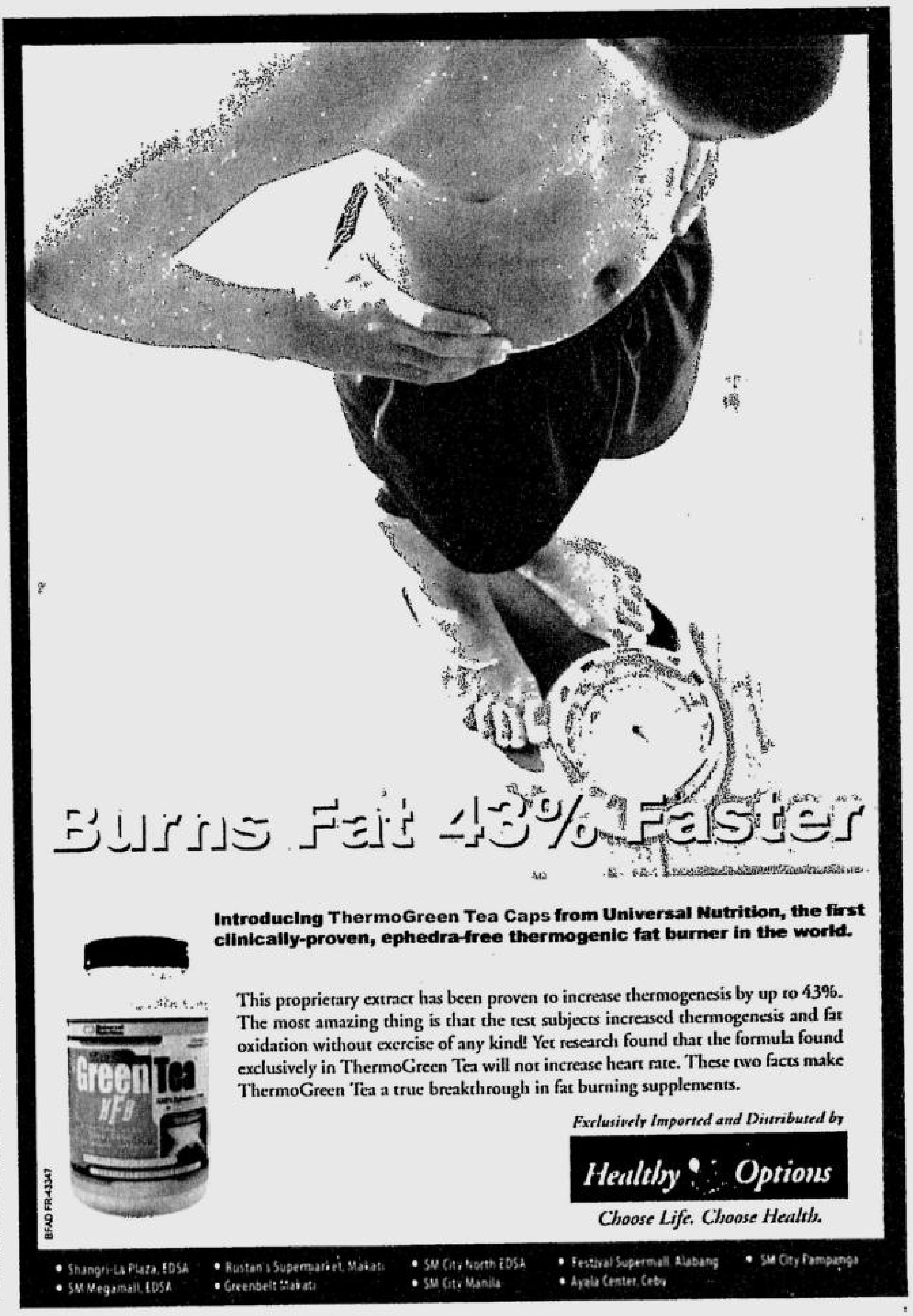
On the overexposure of personalities: "Too much of a good thing is destructive. People will believe in their own hype. They become so engrossed in prettifying themselves and believing what they see in glossies or society pages, that they forget to nurture their inner selves."

Understandably, Marivic has been selective about social functions to attend. (In social gatherings abroad, she says people talk about "ideas not about other people.") She'd rather spend time with people who matter the most to her—her husband, her only child Benito Raffaello "B.R." Lim, and her three grandchildren Bryan, Martynne and Brent.

"When Paeng joined government, it was under attack. There were political upheavals. The stress got him sick. I dropped all that I was doing because he was my first priority."

They have flown twice to the US for Buenaventura's medical treatment and surgery. Her company helped him recover quickly. "I'm happy to say he's recuperating. It could have been so much harder for him. [Also] I realized how important I was to him and how important he was to me," she says. "Paeng has made my life more complete. I was content without him. It's good to be happy with yourself than derive more happiness from someone else."

The couple is looking forward to the end of his term in July. Instead of viewing it as a retirement, Marivic is drawn to the change. They are both stimulated by the new sensations that travel offers. "We'll go on a cruise," she says. "We've never seen the glaciers." Then, she says, Buenaventura could do NGO work, support environment-focused advocacies. She hopes that as private citizens, they will be on the receiving end of positive changes that are bound to flow in, naturally, like the "Luminescence" in her paintings.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Food as medicine

By Dr. Martin Camara
Contributor

> *"Let food be your medicine, let medicine be your food."*
> —*Hippocrates*

LAST ISSUE, we learned about the Okinawans, possibly the longest-living people in the world. We discussed their diets, exercise habits, spiritual practices and community bonds.

One particular aspect that caught my attention, was their custom of *nuchi gusui*, or eating as though food had healing properties. If food is in fact medicine for health and life, then grocery stores and market places should be our pharmacy; the refrigerator, our medicine cabinet.

It's true that we don't need to pop a lot of pills to ward off disease. There are countless health-promoting substances in many of the things we eat everyday that can prevent or even treat illnesses. The body should be able to run well on what is put into it. Only the best foods can help it combat stress and toxins from day to day.

Eating habits influence just about everything that one does, affecting energy level, hormonal balance, mental acuity, cell replacement and repair, metabolism, immune system fortification, bone density, physical stamina, digestion, sleep, cardiovascular health, and blood pressure, among others.

What to eat

Fresh fruits and vegetables. These are among the most powerful of foods. They contain many natural antioxidants, including vitamins A, C, E, carotene, zinc, selenium, bioflavonoids, tocopherols, lutein and quercetin and many beneficial phytochemicals. These help fight age-related and chronic diseases like cancer, boost the immune system, fight osteoporosis, lower the risk of diabetes, and slow down brain aging. They also help alkalinize body systems that are too acidic.

Raw foods. In general, cooking and processing can destroy essential micro-nutrients. This is why at least one-third of all the food (particularly fruits and vegetables) we ingest should be raw.

Fish oils. Omega-3 fatty acids, present in fish oil, are critical for the body to maintain its functions. The acids keep blood cells from clumping and reduce "bad" cholesterol while boosting the "good" type. This helps fight and prevent heart disease, cancer, depression, Alzheimer's, arthritis, diabetes, ulcers, hyperactivity and many other diseases.

Fish oils have been found to act as an antidepressant by raising serotonin levels. It also increases the energy level and ability to concentrate.

To get the full benefits of fish oils, one has to ingest the equivalent of three pounds a day. So it's a good idea to take fish oil capsules—or flaxseed oil, which has very similar benefits and may be tolerated better. Also, the pill form has no mercury, which is found at increasing levels in some fish.

Nuts. Rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. They can lower blood cholesterol, especially when substituted for foods high in saturated fat, such as meat or cheese. Studies from around the world confirm that people who regularly eat nuts cut their risk of heart disease by as much as half, compared to those who rarely, or never, eat nuts.

Sprouts. These living foods contain almost no fat or calories. The vitamin content of a seed multiplies many times in its first few days of sprouting and can reach 20 times that of the mature plant. Sprouts from the brassica family, such as broccoli and radish, supply heart-healthy flavonoids, as well as cell-protecting antioxidants. Other popular sprouts, such as mung bean, are rich in vitamin C, B vitamins, folacin, iron and magnesium.

Water. Flushes uric acid. It has zero calories, quenches thirst better than anything, helps keep the body cool even in the summer. New research has discovered additional benefits of drinking water, including protection from coronary heart disease. People who consume five eight-ounce glasses daily are less likely to die from coronary heart disease than those who consume less than two glasses a day. For children, drinking water is even more essential. Because their bodies are smaller than adults and they sweat less frequently, children suffer from dehydration more than adults. The younger a child is, the fewer margins for error you have, and the more difficult it is to re-hydrate once dehydration begins.

Jimmy Dy Liacco, director general of the Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Healthcare (PITAHC) of the Department of Health (DOH) recommends that we drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day. This he says is the minimum for a tropical country such as ours. If you drink soda or coffee, you need to add an equivalent number of glasses of water. For example, if you drink a cup of coffee and one glass of soda a day, you need to drink a total of 10 to 12 glasses of water. A simple test to check if you lack water is to check the color of your urine. It should be clear. If it is yellowish then you are dehydrated and need to drink more.

What to avoid

Sodas. A can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar, 150 calories and 55 mg of caffeine and is loaded with artificial colors and sulphites. The diet versions of sodas are filled with artificial sweeteners like aspartame that may be harmful to the body. Studies have linked excessive soda intake to osteoporosis, obesity, tooth decay and heart disease.

Fried foods. Filipinos as a whole often LOVE to deep-fry their meats and fish. However, anything that is fried, even vegetables, has the issue of trans-fat and the potent cancer-causing substance acrylamide.

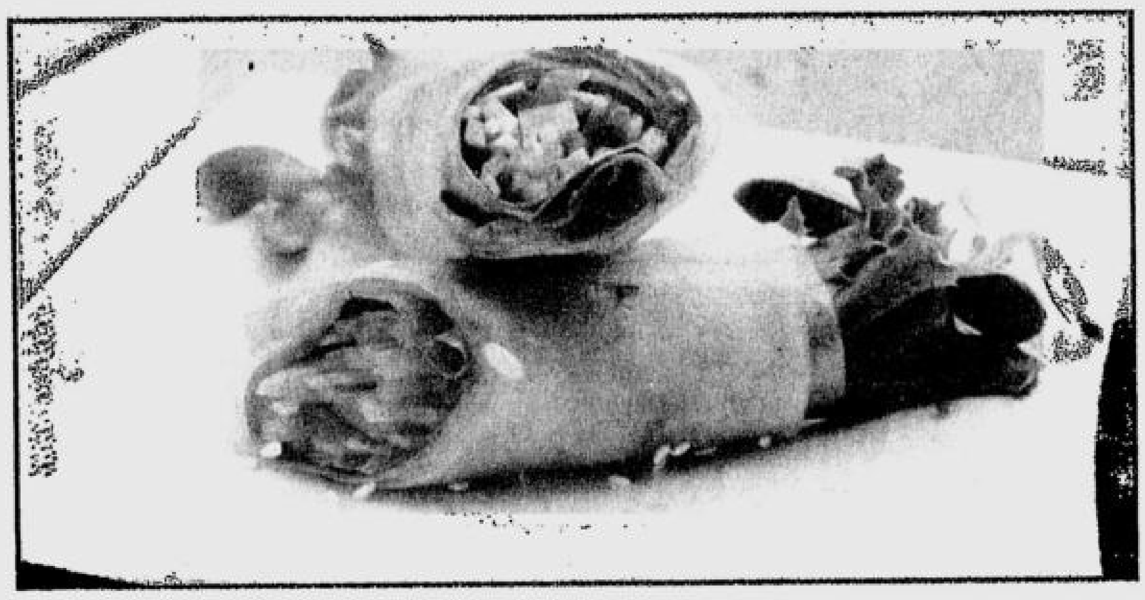
Foods that are fried in vegetable oils like canola, soybean, safflower, corn, and other seed and nut oils are particularly problematic. These polyunsaturated fats easily become rancid when exposed to oxygen and produce large amounts of damaging free radicals in the body. They are also very susceptible to heat-induced damage from cooking. What is not commonly known is that these oils can actually cause aging, clotting, inflammation, cancer and weight gain.

"Hindi lang pampalusog, pampagaling pa." This concept of Food As Medicine is slowly being institutionalized into our public educational system with the help of Grace Eleazar, former director general of PITAHC, DOH. She conceptualized this program to educate elementary school children in the various public schools around Metro Manila in nutritionally sound principles of eating based on the natural healthcare industry.

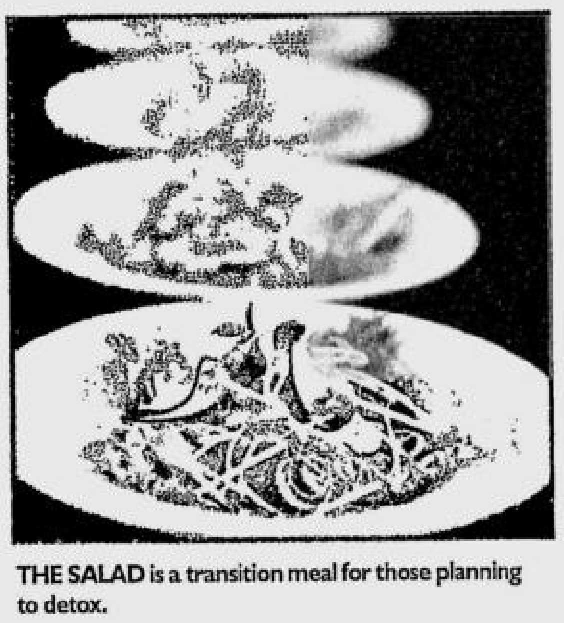
For more information, please call the PITAHC central office at 727-2113 or 727-7621. You may also visit their library at the 24th Floor of the Atlanta Tower in Annapolis Street, Greenhills. It has a wonderful collection of books, journals, magazines and videos on not only on healthful eating but also on healthful living.

If you eat properly for a day, a week or even a month, you are not going to be healthy. It takes regularly eating over a long period of time to actualize results such as longevity and the capacity to do all the activities that one truly enjoys!

For questions, comments or suggestions, please email me at drmartin@intercare-centers.com.



RAVIOLI without the flour



THE SALAD is a transition meal for those planning to detox.

Raw-food diet: rules and rewards

THE FARM at San Benito, like the whole growing tribe of raw food advocates, maintains that many ailments come from what we put in our mouths, and that whoever started boiling, frying and baking centuries ago didn't stop to think whether or not the human system was made to digest processed food.

Sage nutritional advice or nonsense?

A newspaper recently reported that Filipino students have stopped smiling, on account of bad breath and teeth loss. The report said this was caused by poor digestion and malnutrition, especially since a diet of fatty, starchy, and over-processed foods are low on vital nutrients that raw foods offer in abundance.

Challenging the misconception that a raw food diet is expensive, The Farm at San Benito advocates fresh coconut and coconut oil as the best and cheapest alternatives to complete food.

The Farm recommends a diet that consists of 85 percent raw food—unprocessed organic produce, seeds and sprouts—and 15 percent cooked food. Cooking at over 42 degrees Celsius or 105 degrees Fahrenheit destroys enzymes, the mechanisms for our bodily functions, and nutrients. Cooked food is known to clog the intestines and colon over time, leading to diabetes or cancer. In many studies, subjects who went on a raw food diet for only a couple of months overcame arthritis, allergies, cancer and depression.

Epicurean delights

At 85/15 Gourmet Cuisine Restaurant, the day starts with a breakfast of crackers and breads made from coconuts and nuts. (The coconuts are grated, spiced, and placed in the dehydrator. Instead of egg, flax seed oil is used as binder. Raw nuts provide the flavorful texture).

The crackers and breads go with fresh fruit butters and farmer's cheese, made not from cow's milk but from fermented coconut milk and nut paste and flavored with seeds and lemon.

The daily-changing lunch buffet is as much a visual feast as it is a medley of flavors and textures. It is an array of Asian and Western cuisine prepared with blenders, food processors and dehydrators, to preserve the ingredients' freshness and nutrients.

German chef Felix Schöener says it's as much about staying healthy as enjoying life

On the appetizer table is an interesting mix of salads, from salty to sweet—traditional Korean kimchi or fermented cabbage to aid digestion; asparagus marinated in nut oils and lemon juice, and carrots sweetened with fresh pineapple and sesame seeds. The seaweed rolls are filled with vegetable sticks and sprouts on a bed of lettuce with a dressing of wasabi, and a dressing of coconut juice, red beet, ginger and lemon and a dash of salt and cayenne. The paté is cauliflower, pili nuts and turnips mixed to a creamy texture.

The ravioli is made from apples instead of flour-based pasta, marinated in lemon olive oil and salt and a nut base topping.

Zucchini and eggplant are used in making cannelloni. The cauliflower soup, with a base of blended coconut and coconut water, and seasoned with olive oil, salt, cayenne and nutmeg, is served warm. Bits of raw cauliflower add a crunchy texture.

As for the main courses: the European farmer's sausage is made from almonds, walnuts, red beet, celery and carrots, flavored with lemon juice and the usual herbs mixed in sausages — thyme, nutmeg, salt, pepper and Italian seasoning. The Pad Thai has an almond cream base, uses coconut meat instead of noodles, and is topped with carrots and zucchini. The roulade is blanched cabbage with diced carrots, celery and quinoa, a South American grain that is cooked slowly, drenched in a rich sauce of coconut milk, shiitake, lemon juice, cayenne and ginger. As a concession to guests on a day tour who aren't prepared for the raw food diet, there's usually a rich pasta dish, laden with garden vegetables.

The desserts, believe it or not, are to die for. Everybody raves about the milkless ice cream. It is made entirely from fruit pureé, frozen and then prepared in a special machine that extracts its essence to achieve a creamy taste. The chocolate cake is flourless and egg-less, but still rich. The base is coco cream and coconut oil with a natural sweetener and organic chocolate. The crust is made from dried fruit and nuts. The ambrosia's crust, made from desiccated coconut, nuts and dates, encases a mousse composed of coconut cream, chopped fruits, and flavored with lemon juice and moscuvado oil.

Nothing to lose

German chef Felix Schöener says raw food and gourmet cuisines share one principle: highlighting the ingredients.

"My philosophy is to bring out the good flavor of the ingredients," he explains. "It's not like you are losing anything. When I first became a vegan I thought, 'You can't do anything without eggs!' As I learned more, and read more books, I saw the variety of possibilities. You can make almost everything. It's a matter of transforming your habits and way of thinking. You can make incredible cheesecake with coconut. It is gourmet. The philosophy of gourmet cuisine is freshness, and to support the flavors of the ingredients. This is what I learned in the past. This is what we are doing here. We process less and show the ingredients' 'soul,' or deep flavors, more."

Schöener is at the helm of 85/15 Gourmet Cuisine Restaurant. He studied culinary arts in Germany and worked as an apprentice in hotels and gourmet restaurants. He then took jobs across Europe and the United States. Working 16 hours a day burned him out and left him feeling empty. Seeking an alternative lifestyle, Schöener started traveling. He got more curious about the raw food diet, embarking on it while living in Italy and Spain by way of pursuing sustainable living.

The synergy between nature and man fascinated him increasingly. Thus, his next stop was the Tree of Life in Arizona, a holistic healing center, where he enrolled in an apprenticeship program on live foods.

Pleasure

Schöener has been on raw foods for three years. He says he previously suffered chronic ailments like sinusitis, allergies and "other diseases of civilization." With the raw food diet, he claims, these all stopped. Plus, his energy and mental clarity have been boosted.

Like classic gourmet cuisine, the raw food diet has rules. A meal should offer a balance of fat, salt, and sour—the three main tastes, to satisfy the taste buds—plus a dash of spice, and bitterness for complexity.

Main processing techniques are blending, marinating, steaming, blanching, cooking and baking "at extremely low temperatures."

He explains: "We are trying to keep intact all the nutrients vitamins and minerals in the ingredients, and transform into them different textures like chewy or crunchy, creamy or cold. Fresh food is about what you can digest and transform into new energy. Fresh food gives fresh energy that the body can transform into a life force. Eighty percent of energy comes from sunlight. Vegetables contain all the information from the sun, and you are giving this information to the body. When you deep fry, you destroy the energy. This isn't just about health. It's also about enjoying. It's not about losing something. When I changed my lifestyle I felt I was receiving all the benefits."

Marge C. Enriquez

The Farm at San Benito is at 119 Barangay Tipakan, Lipa City, Batangas. Telefax 696-3175 and 696-3795 or call Manila office at 751-3498 and 750-8888 local 72428. Website: www.thefarm.com.ph.

An evolved choice

By Mark J. Macapagal
Contributor

IN the last issue, we met a small but avid group of car buffs whose prime object of infatuation is the Mitsubishi Eclipse. Release of that car model in the Philippines was so limited that most owners had to import their units. There is thus a stated exclusivity about being the owner of an Eclipse: it's not easy to become one.

This is true of becoming the owner of any high-performance car: it's not easy. Prices are prohibitive and, in fact, actual purchase is just an entry point. Soon you'll have an eye on upgrading, lest you end up as the poor man in a rich guys' parking lot.

But let's face it, people go crazy over cars and logic be damned. The Eclipse owners, for instance, spend mightily to procure a rare vehicle, one that has been out of circulation for nearly seven years. Parts are hard to come by, to start with, and you take on all the headaches that come with an older car—an older high-performance car, to be exact.

Occasionally though, some thought cuts through the passion, resulting in a practical point of view. This was the impression I got when we sat down recently with some of the members of the Emperor's Club, a group of Mitsubishi Evolution enthusiasts.

Dolf Santiago, owner of Emperor Motorsports, a high-end car shop on Araneta Avenue, and president of the club, strikes you almost immediately as the no-nonsense type. The guy knows his stuff and speaks with a directness and brevity that only the knowledgeable can command. Quickly and quite simply, he stated that one of the most attractive things about the Mitsubishi Evolution is its price.

When it comes to top cars, the sky's is the limit in terms of the money you're bound to spend acquiring and modifying. For most people then, what's important is how far the bottom drops. With the maximum figure unfixed, what is the most cost-reasonable option? This is where the Mitsubishi Evolution comes in.

The very term "affordable performance car" smacks of relativity and therefore needs clarification. Without getting technical, affordable is anywhere between one and two million pesos. Performance means a car that will blow away Civics, Corollas, Sentras and whichever other cars litter the city streets.

The Evolution has its roots in rally driving, hence the four-wheel-drive engine. It is by no means a cellar dweller in the high-end car market. Its remarkable engine and sleek body have drawn raves with every incarnation, of which there are now eight (the series is always written in roman numerals after "Mitsubishi Evolution."

MITSUBISHI Lancer Evolution

Eric Ngo, another official of the Emperor's Club, is very much representative of the younger owners who spill over with enthusiasm. He does admit that price is one of the Evolution's major draws, but for him it's a matter of pride. "I'm very proud of my car," he told us. "I modify it, I buy new things for it. This is my passion."

On what may well be the other side of the coin is Wilson Chua, older than Eric and a family man. He spoke highly of the car's performance-to-price ratio, quickly adding that owners never lack for spare parts, or even available modifications. However, Wilson admitted that he drives his Evolution only on weekends, so it's not subject to daily wear and tear.

Dolf said the Emperor's Club is a "great help" for any Evolution owner. Members get to help one another with ideas and problems, he noted. But the ultimate benefit, he said, is the camaraderie: "You have to realize [that] if you have no one to talk to about your car, you get bored with it. It's important to keep the company of people who think the same way."

Send direct comments to: mark_mac72@hotmail.com.

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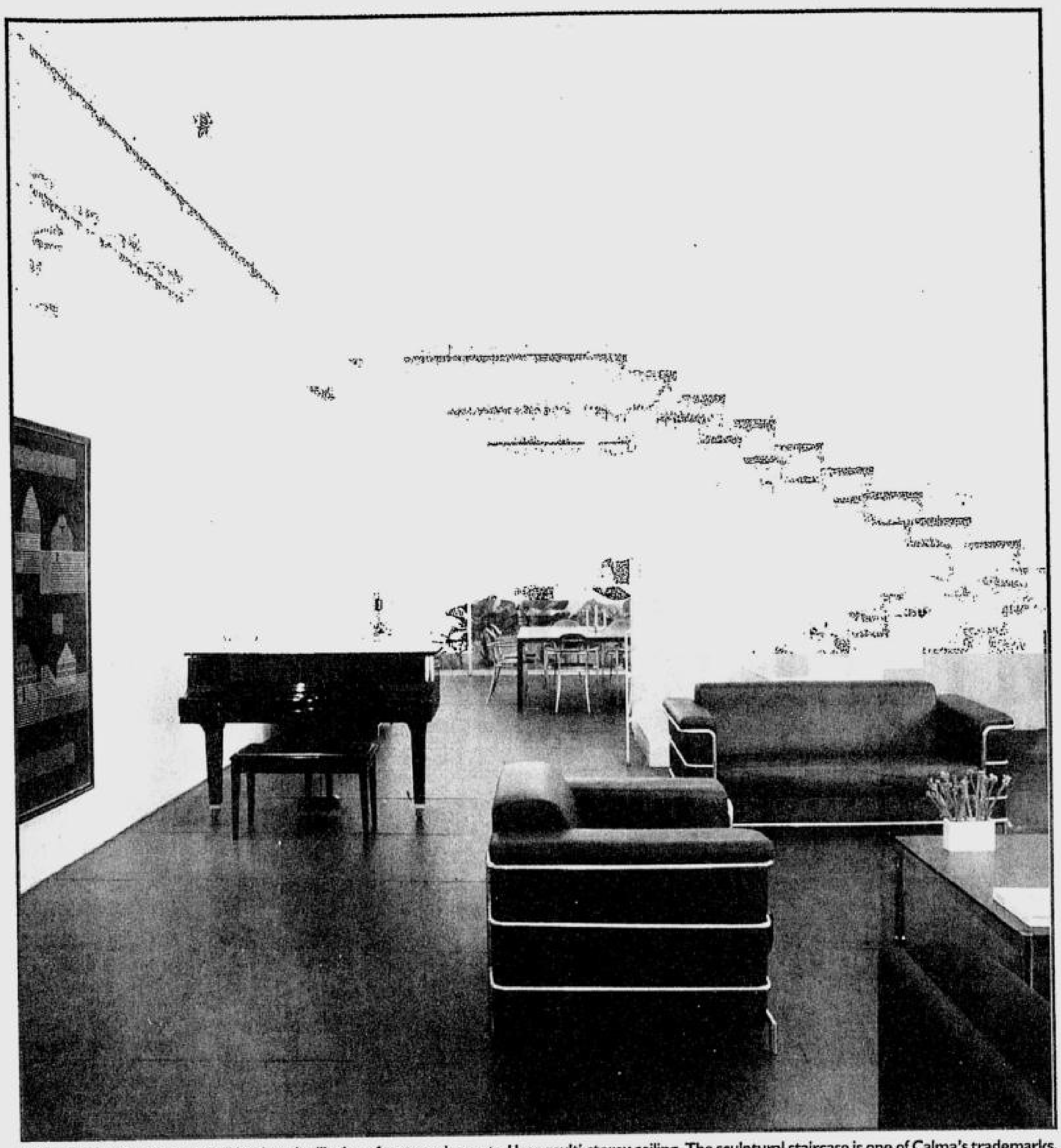
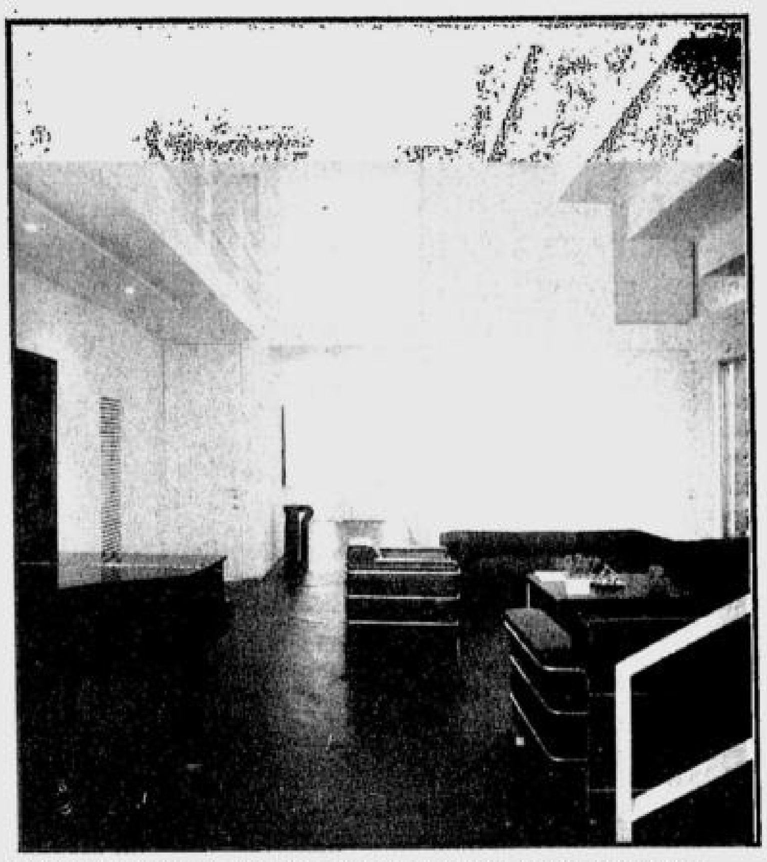
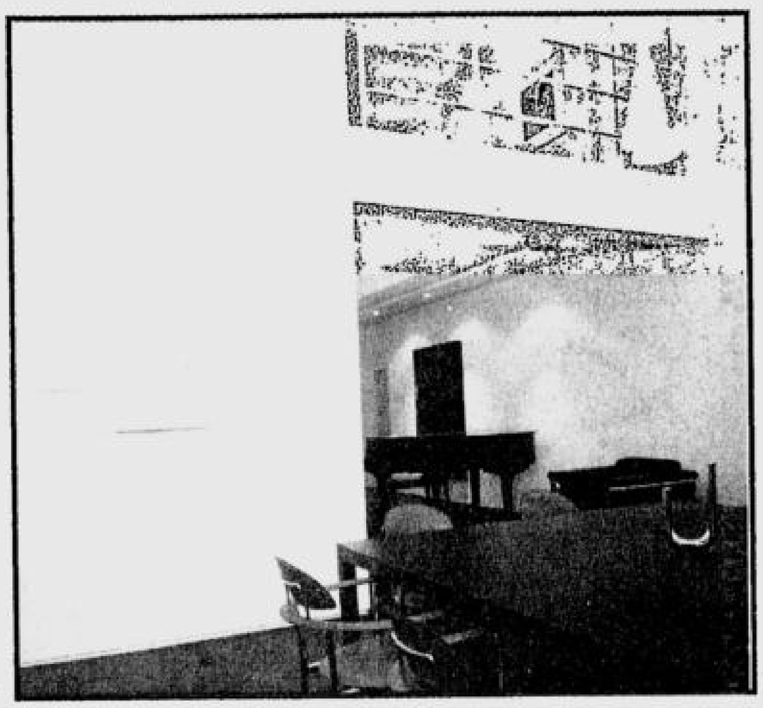


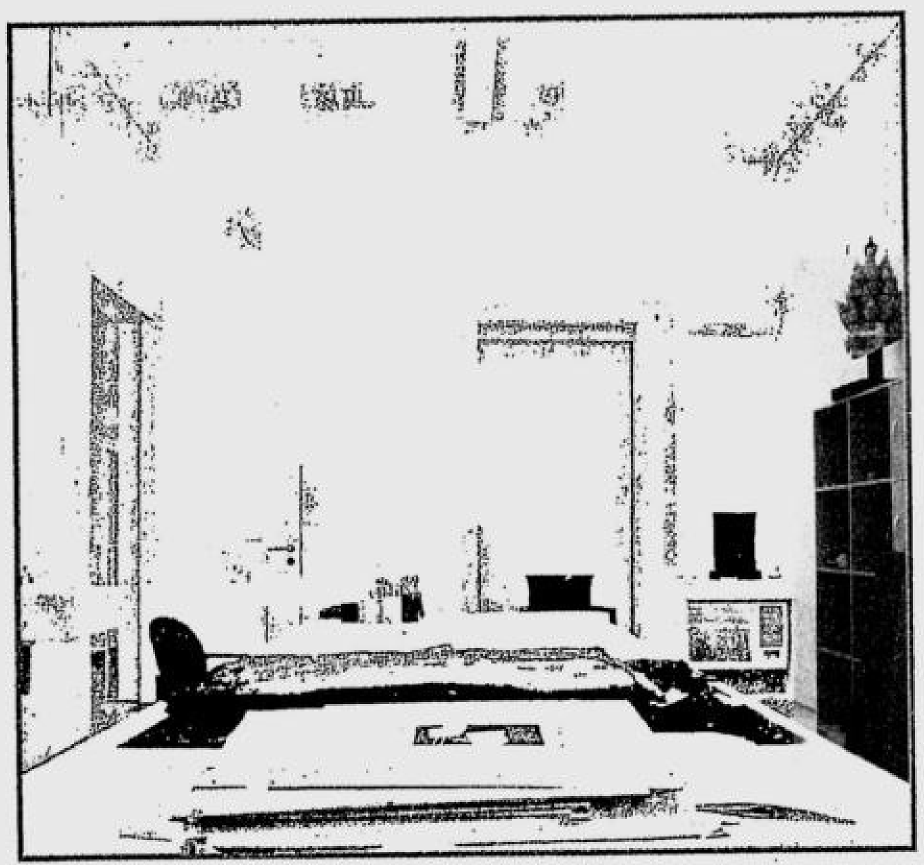
THE HOUSE is built on a small lot, but the illusion of vastness is created by a multi-storey ceiling. The sculptural staircase is one of Calma's trademarks. The simplicity of the design makes the place conducive to displaying artworks.



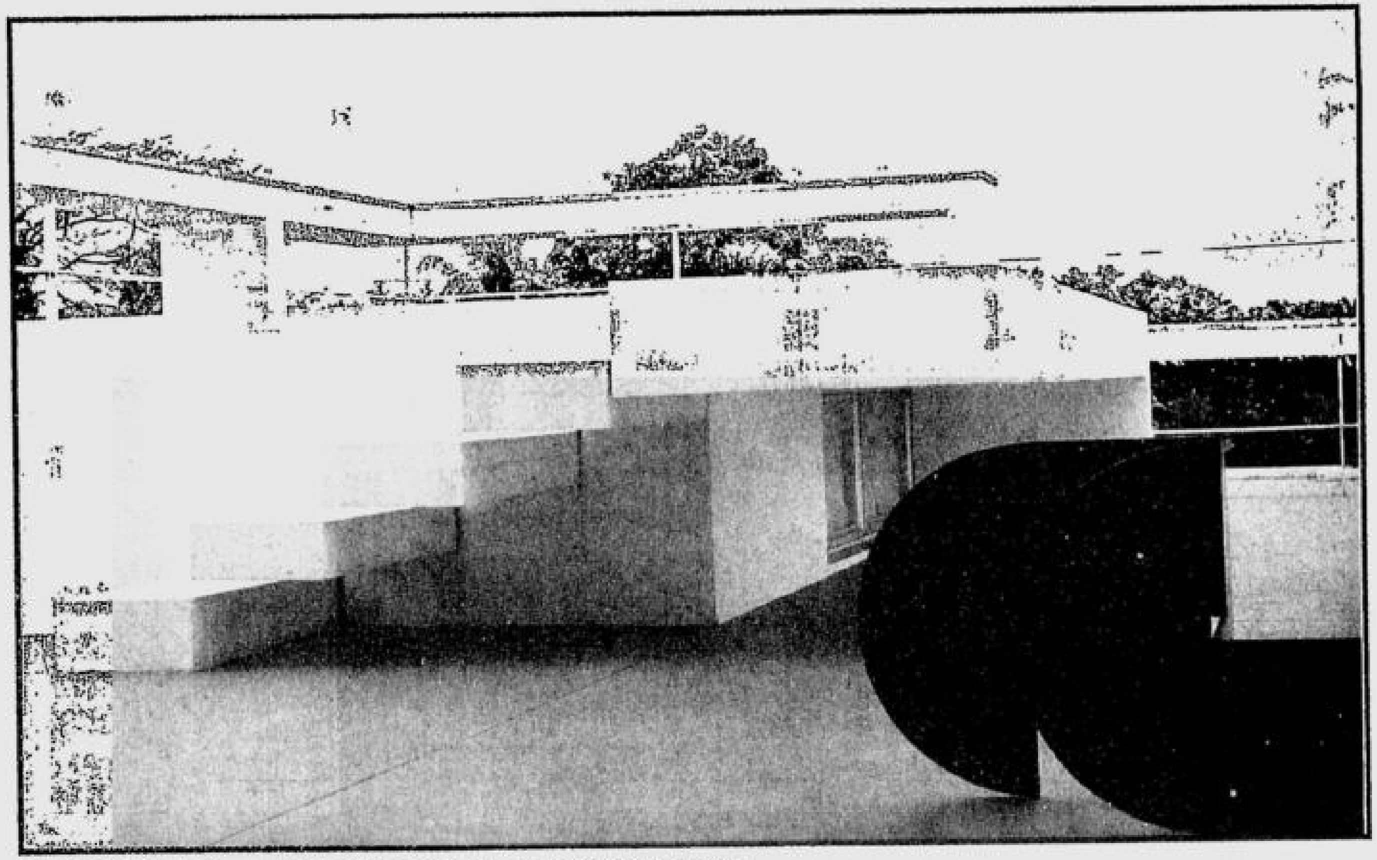
THE WINDOWS are like apertures providing natural lighting for the artist's house.



THE DINING area is designed to focus on the spatial quality. It is simply furnished by a sculpture, leather furniture and a wenge table.



CALMA provided an opening in the ceiling for more sunlight.



MULTI-LEVEL platform on the deck complements an abstract sculpture.

Amazing space

By Meluchi A. Rivera
Contributor
Photos by Ava Lugtu
Pictorial direction by Albert Avellana

IN CROWDED, harried, chaotic Metro Manila, it is the ultimate luxury. And the sensitive artist is perhaps quickest to realize this.

Our homeowner, a legend in the art world, wanted his new home to be spacious; expansive in feel, if not in size.

"I lived in a rented house for a long time, full of antiques and plants accumulated over the years," he recounts. "But little by little, I started letting go of my things. And when I decided to build my own house, I knew I wanted there to be very little furniture. I wanted it simple, almost bare."

This was precisely what he got from the father-and-son team of Lorenzo and Eduardo Calma who provided the design direction and project architect Dennis Sison. Working on a relatively modest 406 square meters, the Calmas drew on their expertise at creating modern residences to craft an abode that is airy, open, and bathed in light.

The entire structure, save for floors and some counters, are done in white. From the outside, one beholds a box that has been split slightly off-center by a "canopy" above the front door. Speaking to the younger Calma later on, we find that this delineation also serves to set the living areas apart from the public areas, as the three bedrooms are positioned to the left of the canopy while the living room, dining room, den and office are on the other.

From the main doorway, one enters a seemingly cavernous space, as the eye is immediately drawn to the stunning, exposed staircase and the glass walls at the far end of the room. Designed like a free-standing structure, the staircase traverses all three levels of the house. The contrasting black floor of unpolished slate heightens the feel of a borderless space.

Stark palette

After taking it all in, one realizes that the main light source is the staircase itself, lit from above via the roof deck windows, just beyond what the eye can see.

The art pieces displayed throughout the house are few but carefully chosen. Plywood reliefs and a sculpture by National Artist Arturo Luz greet visitors at the foyer. The space leading to the dining room accommodates a baby grand piano and is further set off by a large painting, also by Luz. Walls on the second floor are unadorned, save for a '70s abstraction by Fernando Zobel.

> When this man of the arts built his own house after years of renting, he wanted it to be very simple, almost bare

Moon viewing platform

Our homeowner's aesthetic is likewise reflected in the furniture pieces that hew to the stark palette. In the living and dining areas, modern pieces from Italian and German design houses are mixed with a few pieces from Lor Calma's workshop. In the bedrooms, visual clutter is kept to a minimum, with built-in beds and side tables using formica, glass and aluminum.

Our homeowner's favorite room is his office-cum-study on the second floor, with a 12-foot-high ceiling and frosted panes that allow lots of natural light to come in. It is set apart from the rest of the house and can be accessed via a "bridge" above the foyer.

Perhaps coming a close second is the roof-deck, which he calls his moon-viewing platform. Situated right above his studio, it is a bi-level area that affords a 360-degree vista of the city.

As with most modern structures, much of the wonder lies in what is not seen—the absence of exposed columns, wires and pin lights concealed within the walls and ceilings, structural lines that almost always meet at a right angle. The architects gave thoughtful consideration even to functions usually deemed extraneous to most homes, such as an underground cistern and a rooftop tank in which to store water. These have been artfully concealed and incorporated into the main structure.

Subtle light source

Each room has been given a source of natural light, via glass walls or panels of frosted glass. There is no need to turn on a single light bulb within the house during the day, not even in the bathrooms. Yet, light quality is very subtle. "It is all reflected light. No openings that directly face a light source," explains Calma.

While visitors may miss these subtle details, they almost always discern the sense of order, which translates into a feeling of well-being and lightness. Instead of coming off as cold, the simplicity is actually relaxing.

The house took 14 months to build, with finishing work taking longer than the shell's construction. "The carpenters kept coming back, saying they needed to re-finish the closets," our homeowner recounts. "This went on for three months until I told them, 'Enough. Go away and never come back.'"

Meeting of minds

As our homeowner tells it, from the very beginning "it was a meeting of the minds." He and the architects met to conceptualize the space for a total of 10 minutes. "After that, they gave me the plans and I said, 'Perfect!' I did not change a single line," he recounts.

It helped that the older Calma was a friend and contemporary. The semi-retired Lor envisioned the layout, while son Ed gave the design form and substance.

The homeowner virtually gave the architects carte blanche after that initial meeting, stepping in only on matters concerning the budget and, at the finishing stages, on choosing "the exact shade of white to be used." Nonetheless, the younger Calma admitted that working with such a renowned client posed its own unique challenges.

"He is steeped in the visual arts, so it was a challenge to keep the design disciplined," Calma says. "This is perhaps the most restrained house we have done. Nothing is unnecessary. No line is arbitrary."

A SUPER SHOPPING ADVENTURE

Currently, the talk of the town with its super choices, super prices and super shopping experience is the Super SM Hypermart located in SM Supercenter Sucat, SM City Bicutan and SM City Marilao.

A better version of the hypermarket concept which combines supermarket, general merchandise and discount retailing, Super SM Hypermart is comparable to its world-wide counterparts like Carrefour and Casino in Europe and Asia. In the U.S., outlets of this type include Wal-Mart, and Super K-Mart.

Super SM offers one-stop shopping convenience by carefully consolidating a well-selected array of food and general merchandise items. Each Super SM Hypermart is designed to give the customer hefty savings in time and money, and at the same time enhance the total shopping experience.

Its food area includes the freshest picks of the day at the fresh seafood and vegetable sections; choicest cuts at the meat and poultry section; and a wide variety of dairy, deli and grocery items.

Top of the lists of favorites in Super SM is the hypermarket's bakery section, Bake-Off, where shoppers can get bread and pastries straight from the oven; mouthwatering rotisserie chicken and liempo at the Prepared Food section; and native treats like bibingka, putobongbong, maja blanca , cassava cake and fresh lumpia at the hypermarket's food cart.

It is no secret that shoppers pack all three hypermarkets and for a reason: they get super value for their peso. The hypermarket's wholesale and super value packs are just a few money-savings opportunities that shoppers can't just stop talking about.

Super SM also features general merchandise departments including women's, men's, children's and infant's wear and accessories; a full line of shoes, housewares and furnitures; appliances; audio and video equipment; sporting goods, stationary and hardware items.

For customer convenience, Super SM, has spacious and well-lit aisles, customer friendly merchandise display, efficient check out service, and walkalators where shoppers can wheel down their purchases in shopping carts straight down to the covered parking area.

R THE MONTH
DECEMBER

Ms. Buena Bascuguin
Shop n' Win P 150,000 monthly winner
December 2004

Due to insistent public demand the "Shop 'n Win" promo is now currently on its fourth season. Creating a lot of excitement for shoppers at each of the Super SM outlets is the chance to win P10,000 daily, P175,000 in the monthly draws and P2 million in the grand draw.

For a minimum purchase of P500.00, shoppers get a chance to win in the daily, monthly and grand draw scheduled on January 14, 2006.

CAROL GUEVARRA
1,500,000.00
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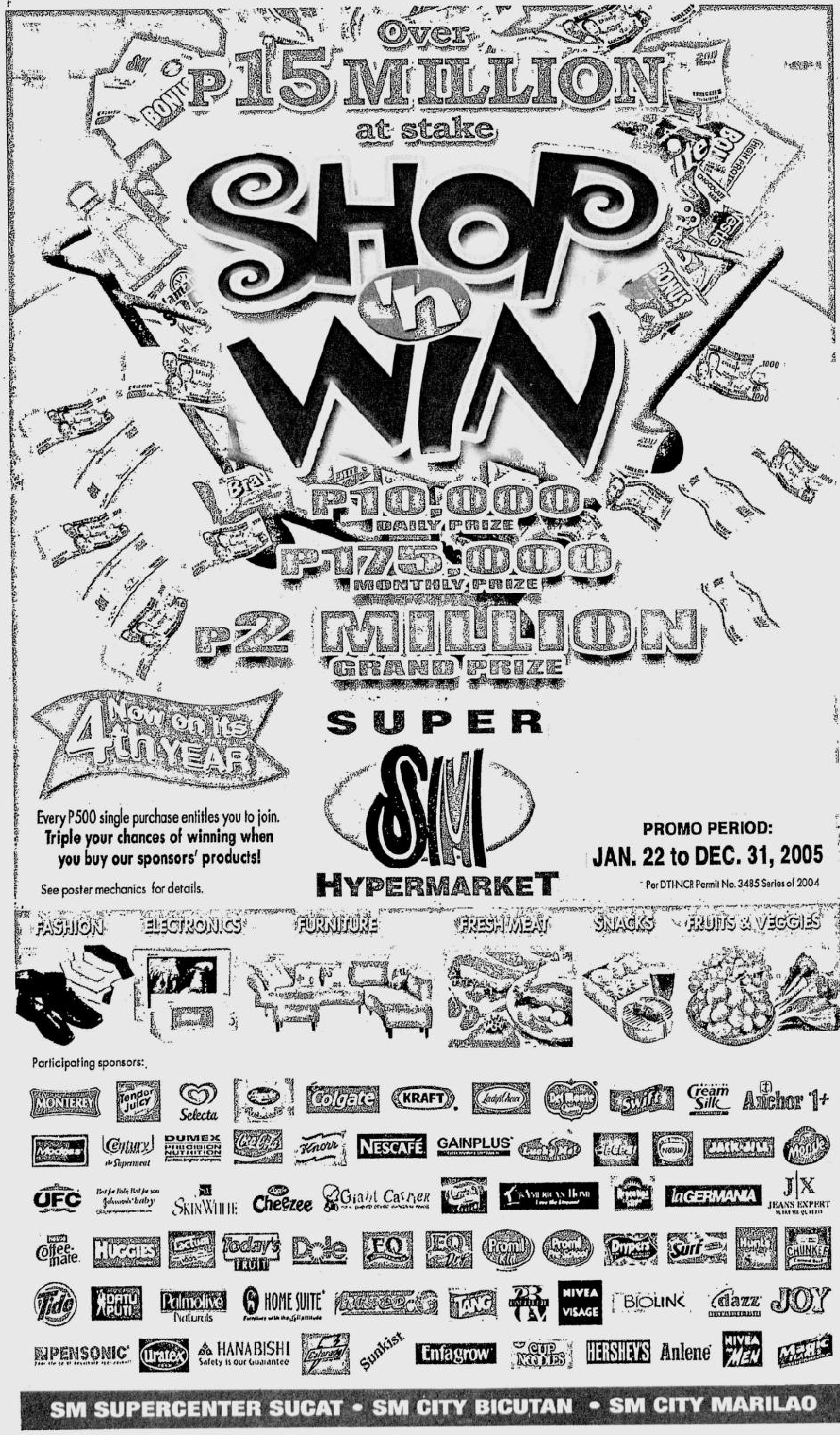
Ms. Carol Guevarra
Shop n' Win 2004 Grand Draw winner

Enjoy a super shopping experience at Super SM located at the second level of SM Supercenter Sucat, Second Level, Building B of SM City Bicutan, and at the Ground Floor of SM City Marilao.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Super!Countdown
16 days 'til V-day!

It's every thing

anti-septic

Peque Gallaga goes Blonde page F1

Did Pops kill the 'It girl?' page E1

the Gucci cruise page G4

Red-hot MTV phone page D3

Produced by TIM YAP
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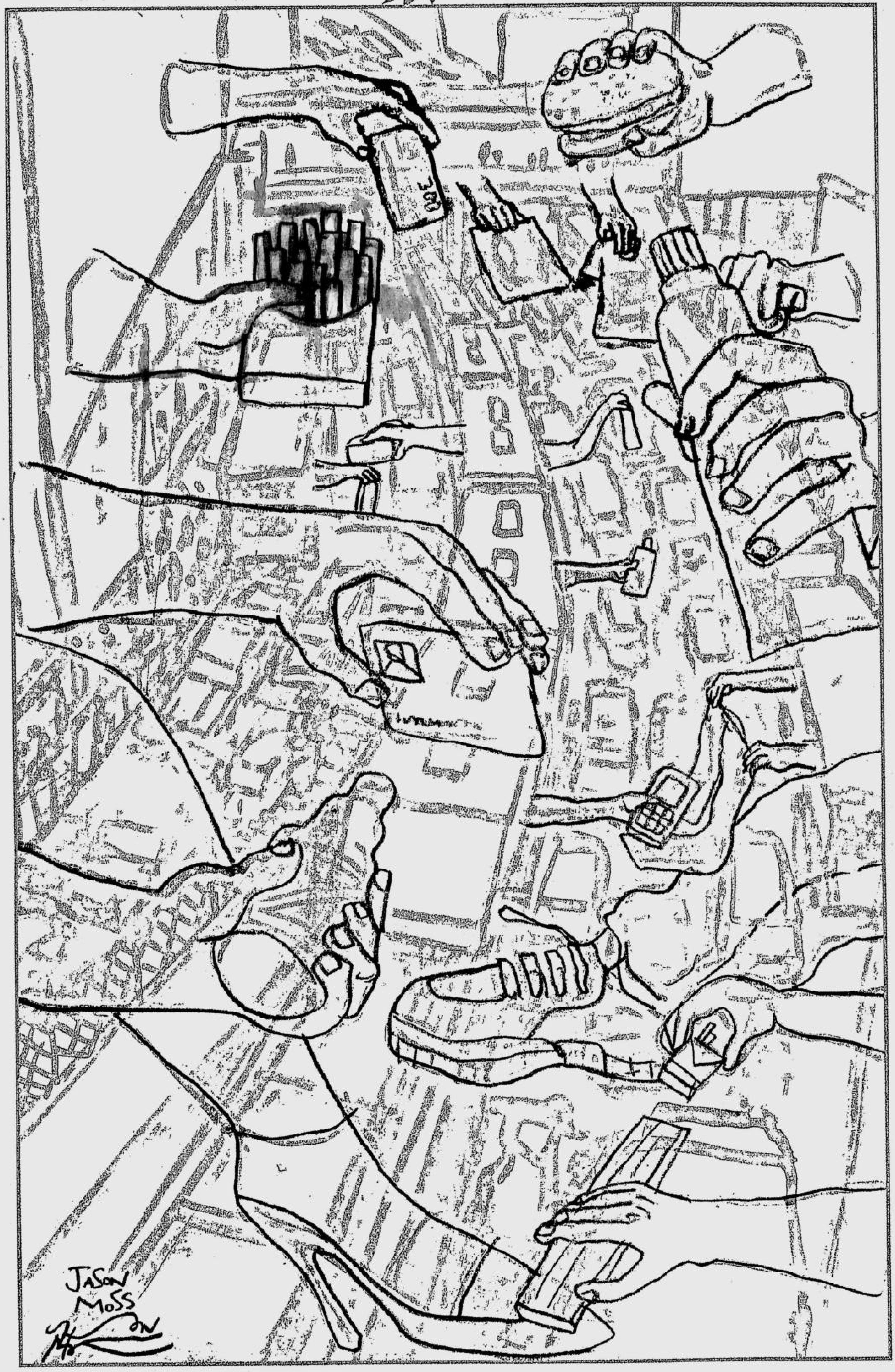


ODD-VERTISEMENTS

By James Gabrillo, Tals Diaz and Gino de la Paz
Original Artwork by Jason Moss

WE GOT a tight spot, everyone.

Advertisements on print, television and billboards aren't engaging audiences like they used to. There's nothing truly spectacular about the material showing lately.

The point of hiring a human in an advertisement is for him/her to actually help boost sales significantly, either through superstar status or personal allure. Yet we've noticed some general misses lately, to name a few:

Shampoo commercial models. Many of these ladies look like they've been polished to a reflective sheen, that they end up becoming the not-much-awaited follow-up to "The Stepford Wives." In real life, one can depict them as those laughing graciously at the corny jokes coming from old executives at charity dinners. They're about as genuine as real breasts in Hollywood.

***Artistas* and their computer schools.** Now, do you *seriously* believe these celebs really study in the schools they're endorsing? If you do, maybe you're their classmate. Or their principal. Whatever.

Double whammy: People selling toilet paper + Anti-LBM pills. One contained scenes of a middle-aged gentleman causing a commotion in the escalator of a mall because of a sudden, intense call of nature. We'd take 10 reruns of the whipping scene in "Passion of the Christ" over this any day. Blood is thicker than water, and is also more watchable than crap.

Bill-bored

Ladies and gentlemen, the TOP FIVE EERIEST BILLBOARD ADS:

5. Kris Aquino for Leonardo Bags. The makers of this ad must've woken up one morning and thought to themselves, "Oh, the brand's not funny enough—let's hire Kris!"

4. Judy Ann Santos for Pacific Blue Shades. Employing the most inane tagline yet, "See you—Judy Ann Santos." What they don't see is us flipping the bird back at you, Juday.

3. Hang Ten underwear with the chinito guy (previously seen in the Ateneo area). All together now… Eeew!

2. Petit Monde with Cheska Garcia, Anne Curtis, Jodi Sta. Maria and Angel Locsin. Extras from "Mean Girls." They wish.

1. Heart Evangelista eating a bowl of noodles for Yoshinoya. Heart, please stop pretending it's delicious. Heart, please stop pretending. Heart, please stop. Heart, please!

Yet not everything we've seen is a miss, and here are two precise hits that have left a good impression:

The girl singing on the sidewalk for the new Coke TVC. Even if the lip-synching here gives the impression of a Japanese monster movie (very Godzilla!), the ad is a winner, thanks to the chick who shines from start till the timer hits 30 seconds.

The Chippy boys finishing their term paper. After slaving till the wee hours for a school paper, their computer crashes without them being able to save their opus. The solution? Eating chips. Cheeky! British! Comedy! Chippy!

So much money goes into producing ads that occupy prime time and space. But before an ad gets the green light, shouldn't more attention be devoted to its execution? If not, billboards are reduced to public eyesores, and TVCs just induce zzzz's. More than just mindless couch commandoes, consumers deserve insightful and well thought-out ad campaigns to spice up their regularly programmed lineup. It takes more than a sloppy ad for consumers to open up and say "Ahh."

SUPER! SELECTIONS

Red, hot chili mobile

By Pam Pastor

WHAT'S red, hot, sleek, stylish and will undoubtedly become the object of techno-lust?

Samsung's Special Version MTV Asia Awards E630 mobile phone.

Journalists from all over Southeast Asia flew all the way to Bangkok for its launch—and what a journey it was.

Our exploit began with an enjoyable dinner overlooking the sea. The trip from the hotel was long and by the time we arrived, we were all ravenous. Luckily, service was quick. Our tables were laden with platter after platter of food until we could no longer lift the utensils to our mouths. The dishes ranged from mildly spicy to you'll-feel-like-a-dragon spicy—the meal was an adventure on a plate. There was room for dessert, of course—mango sticky rice and fresh fruits—and both were equally yummy.

We shared our table with a TV host from Malaysia whose camera man documented every course of the meal. At one point, the camera was pointed toward us and we were encouraged to introduce ourselves and say hi to his audience. The thought that I may already have made a fool of myself on Malaysian television without knowing it is a bit disconcerting.

Thanks to our full stomachs, the ride back lulled us into a dreamy, lethargic state. But when the bus finally pulled into the hotel driveway, our energy was high again.

Pinoys in Patpong

Samsung's Angie Limbaco, Philippine Star's Igan D' Bayan and I are Pinoys, after all, and what Pinoy could resist the lure of the night market?

Although I tried to stay true to my vow not to shop too much, the trip to Patpong was enjoyable—and not because of the girlie bars that kept their doors wide open.

The next morning, after breakfast, we headed to Samsung's Red Hot Pre-MTV Asia Awards Press Event, which was hosted by Thai MTV VJs Woody and Nicky.

It is Samsung's first time as an Official Partner Sponsor for the 2005 MTV Asia Awards. And to celebrate their partnership with MTV, Samsung unveiled the special version MTV Asia Awards Samsung SGH-E630 phone, a gorgeous phone in stunning valentine red.

The phone, which is a tri-band slide-up, shows off the latest in noise suppression technology. That means this phone has the capability to automatically sense the level of sound around you and increase the volume of incoming calls for more clarity.

It is packed with other features as well—a flash VGA camera, high-quality TFT color screen, a personal organizer, photo caller ID and melody composer. The special MTV Asia Awards version will also come loaded with exclusive wallpapers, screensavers and ringtones.

After ogling the eye-catching mobile phone and the models' kick-ass wrestling shoes (seriously, we were contemplating running off with them), we sat down for a martial arts exhibition.

'Kung Fu Hustle' live

Men started flying and kicking and jumping around us, in a display of machismo and flexibility. It was like watching "Kung Fu Hustle" live.

When the action was over, Mr. Sang-Jin Park, Regional CEO and President of Samsung Asia, took the stage and talked about their partnership with MTV and Samsung's position in the global and Southeast Asian market. He also spoke of Samsung's continued plans to make a difference in young people's lives.

"Selected celebrities at the MTV Asia Awards will be invited to autograph a few of the special version phones. The phones will then be auctioned in local markets following the February event, with all funds raised going to local charity partners," he said. In the Philippines, Bantay Bata was the chosen charity.

The phone is a limited edition, with only 10,000 units to be sold. (3,000 in Thailand, 1,000 in Singapore, 2,000 in Malaysia, 3,000 in Indonesia and 1,000 in the Philippines.)

Since we Pinoys were still full from breakfast, we skipped lunch and headed off to MBK for a quick shopping stop. When we returned to the hotel, the bus was ready to leave for my most-anticipated activity—our Muay Thai lesson.

To get us even more in the mood for the martial arts-themed party that night, we had been scheduled for a crash course in Thailand's national sport. At the Thai Boxing Stadium, we quickly removed our shoes and socks, chang-ed into our Muay Thai shorts and waited for our lesson to start. Soon, Grand Master of Muay Thai Yuttana Wongbandue called us to the boxing ring.

Muay Thai, my thigh

The hour-long session was a blast. I may have just found a sport I can stick with. Grand Master Yuttana was a lot of fun. He taught us four basic moves and we practiced doing them one after the other.

The other instructors were encouraging as well—they held up cushions for us to punch and kick. My legs and thighs were aching but it didn't matter. I gave it my all. Grand Master Yuttana threw a couple of "very goods" my way. I swear, I actually beamed. But at one point, I accidentally kicked one of the Malaysian journalists. That wiped the grin off my face.

The hour ended too soon and even Grand Master Yuttana expressed his desire for more time. He still had a lot of things to teach us, he said. For a split second I considered losing my passport on purpose. But then I knew I had reality to return to—beautiful reality albeit Muay Thai-less.

We had a graduation of sorts. Grand Master Yuttana handed us certificates from the World Academy of Muay Thai. I am seriously going to have mine laminated.

Spa-stic

The schedule was tight and we had no time to change. Because we were almost late for our spa appointment, we returned to the bus still wearing our Muay Thai shorts. What a sight that must have been—a whole group of tourists walking into the spa wearing Muay Thai shorts in different colors. But the spa attendants pretended not to notice. For the next hour, they kneaded our sore and aching bodies. The delicious pain was followed by relief.

200 Thai celebrities

That night, after dinner at Tumsom, we walked into the Red Hot Pre-MTV Asia Awards Party. The place was packed. Apparently, we were surrounded by other members of the media, Samsung consumers and over 200 Thai celebrities. There was an area especially reserved for martial arts experts to spar all night. It was interesting to watch, the most surreal fishbowl I've seen in my life.

The next day, I returned to my world in Manila. Then, after over a week, the tsunamis struck. Suddenly, the memories of our Bangkok expedition seemed light years away. The country we had explored was now mourning an unimaginable loss. And the rest of the world was weeping with it.

Tsunami squad

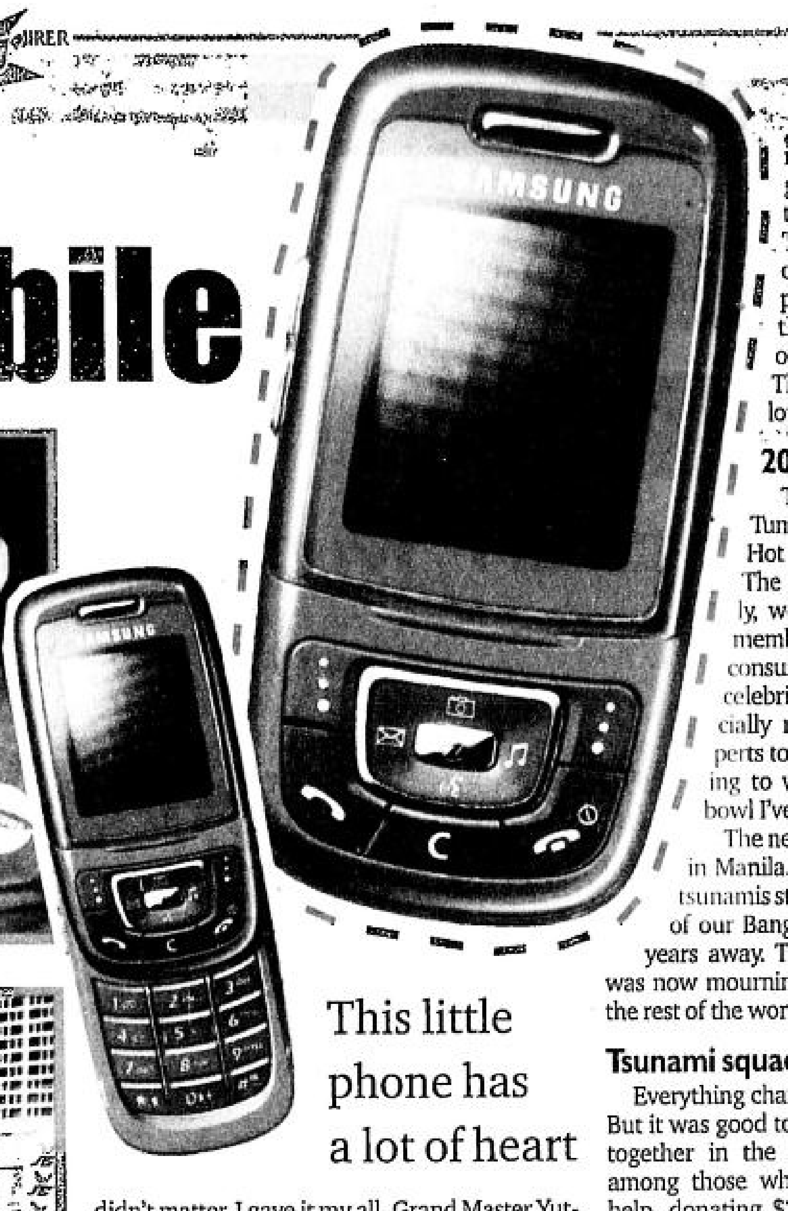
Everything changed that day, it's undeniable. But it was good to see countless people coming together in the relief efforts. Samsung was among those who responded to this cry for help, donating $3 million. Over 10,000 Samsung employees have also volunteered in local relief and fund-raising efforts in Thailand, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka.

Samsung is still an official partner sponsor of the 2005 MTV Asia Awards and now of MTV Asia Aid. Both Samsung and MTV are aiming to contribute to and aid the tsunami relief efforts. Aside from the local charities chosen, money raised from the Celebrity Charity Auction of signed and accessorized MTV Asia Award SGH E630s will also go to Unicef for tsunami relief. Samsung consumers who sign up for Samsung's Fun Club will also help contribute in raising funds.

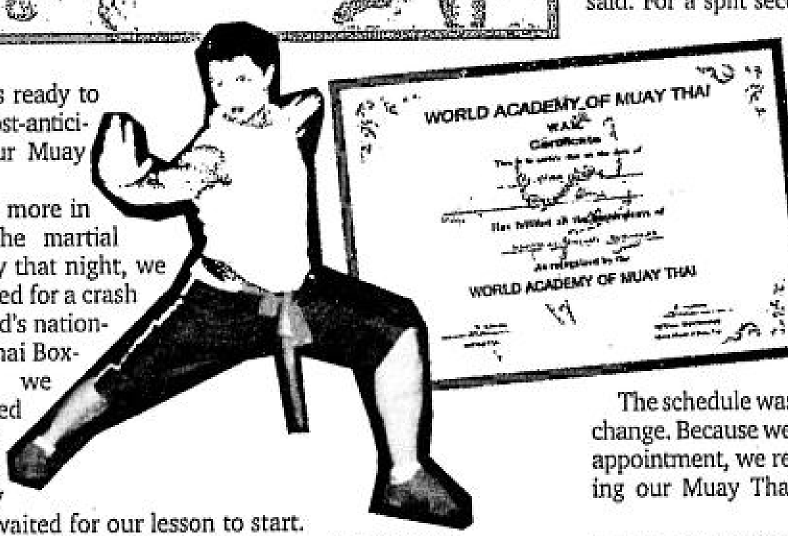
I thought our Bangkok trip was a tale to be told. But the real story happened after—the story of life after tragedy, of a world trying to pick up the pieces in all ways imaginable.

Samsung's Special Version MTV Asia Awards E630 mobile phone will be available in mid-February. Sign up at the Samsung Fun Club website (asia.samsungmobile.com.)

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.



This little phone has a lot of heart



WORLD ACADEMY OF MUAY THAI

Certificate

WORLD ACADEMY OF MUAY THAI

BANGKOK SCRAPBOOK. (Counterclockwise, from top right) Two faces of the Samsung's MTV Asia Awards E630; the girls show off the red-hot mobile; Master Yuttana shows us the moves; this will soon be on my wall

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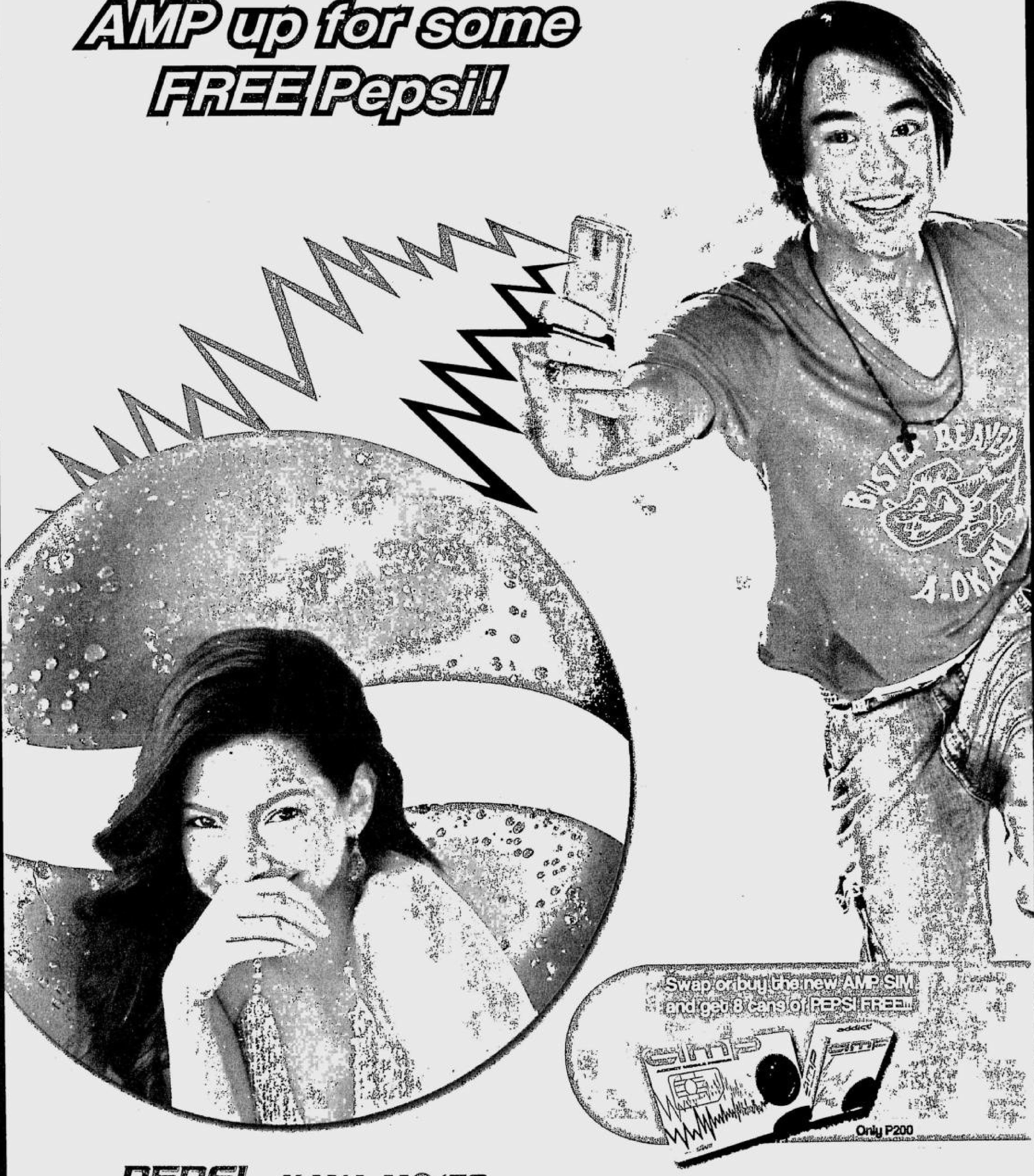

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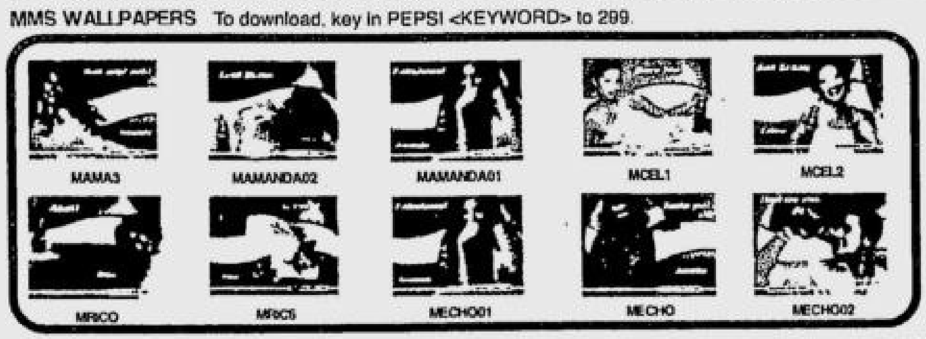

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ARTIST	TITLE	KEYWORD
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	Sunday Driving	SUNDRIVE
	Umaaraw Umuulan	ARAWULAN
	Balisong	BALISONG
Jennifer Lopez	Ain't It Funny	FUNNY
	If You Had My Love	IFUHADMYLUV
	Jenny From the Block	JENYFRMDBLCK
	Let's Get Loud	GETLOUD
	Play	PLAY
Beyonce	Baby Boy	BABYBOY
	Crazy in Love	CRAZYINLUV
Ricky Martin	Livin' La Vida Loca	LAVIDALOCA
	She Bangs	SHEBANGS

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ARTIST	TITLE	RING ID
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	A Love To Share	100126
	Umaaraw Umuulan	100140
	Balisong	100897
South Border	Playa	100613
	The Show	100614
Beyonce	Baby Boy	101466
	Crazy In Love	101467
Ricky Martin	Livin' La Vida Loca	101513
	She Bangs	101516

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When 'It' hit the fan

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

NEW YORK, London and all the world capitals are loaded with them. Without a doubt, Tokyo, Hong Kong and—dare I say it?—Manila never run out of them. And by the time you finish reading this, I'm sure Kabul would have become home to their kind, too.

By "them," I don't mean giant sewer rats, flu-infected birds or African killer bees (though they might as well be to certain people). Rather, by "them," I mean those twinkly-eyed, party-hopping, red-carpet-ready magnets of curiosity known as It girls and It boys. Got it? Awesome.

Even if you're not a certified gawker, you can definitely spot these young, ubiquitous—and arguably—golden individuals with a modicum of ease. Just look around you. In general, these Its hold court at boutique openings, lay siege during art exhibits and earn their stripes wherever the hoi polloi are not permitted to attend. While you're at it, snatch up any major fashion rag and you'll find them immortalized in the glitterati pages together with other such Voguebots and trust fund babies.

Love them or loathe them, their glossy It-dom has become prime media fodder, giving Page Six fanatics more water cooler moments on top of their usual fare of show biz gossip. (The more enterprising celebutantes—like Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie—have, in fact, leveraged their status into television careers. By doing so, they have blurred the lines between class and crass even more. Hooray?) Pulling back a bit, however, how did this It mania begin anyway? More important, where is It taking us?

The original 'It'

To demystify this wild card, let me introduce yesterday's special. The American actress Clara Bow (1905-1965) was a silent film superstar of the Roaring Twenties. In a 1927 movie called "It," Bow portrayed Betty Lou Spence, a beautiful, sassy, self-confident sales girl at the Waltham Department Store, who sets her saucer eyes on her boss (Antonio Moreno).

Showcasing unabashed sexiness, this movie transformed Bow from a Jazz Age cutie-pie to the first mass-market sex symbol of her time. All of a sudden, fans had a new name for her: the "It Girl." According to critic Robert Horton, this original definition of It clearly paved the way for subsequent It girls like Marilyn Monroe and Madonna. Ah, so that's where it came from.

The following decades saw the term go through an evolution of sorts, the pinnacle of which took place during the high '80s when It became known as "the X factor." Nonetheless, scene chroniclers and media pundits—especially those behind "Entertainment Weekly" magazine and its annual "It List"—pushed the term back into circulation sometime in the mid-to-late '90s.

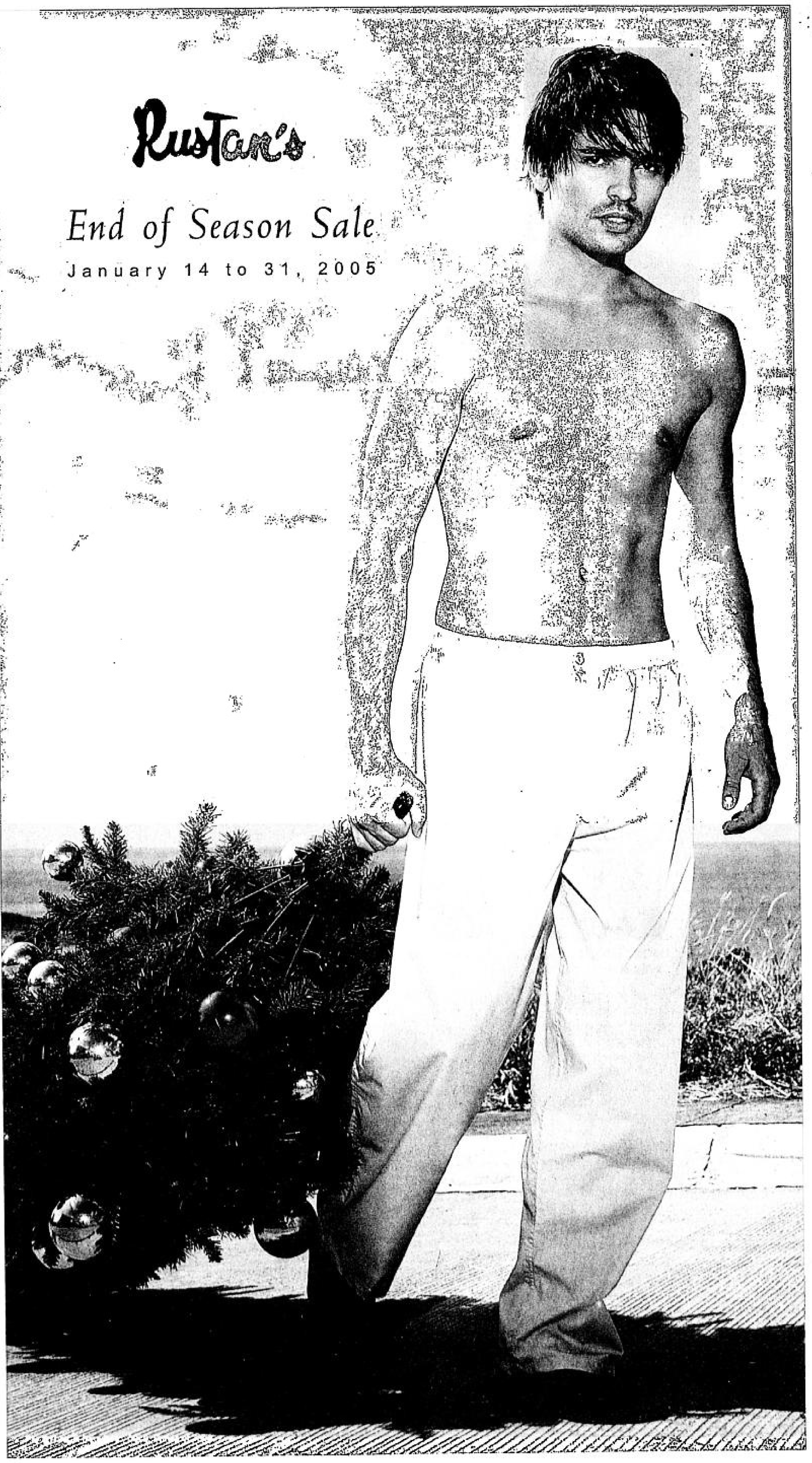
The fall of 'It'

As the world at-large became fully indoctrinated and, like hungry Pac-Mans, gobbled all matters pertaining to It-dom, the phrase soon became uncomfortably common and lost most of its original zing. In a twitchy sort of way, every struggling/up-and-coming/breakthrough celebrity (Hollywood or otherwise) was suddenly granted It status: Brad Pitt in 1991's "Thelma & Louise," Gwyneth Paltrow in 1998's "Shakespeare In Love," and, most recently, Hilary Swank for 1999's "Boys Don't Cry" and last year's "Million Dollar Baby."

International modeling, too, had its It moments. From the supermodel era of the '80s and '90s (Linda, Christy, Naomi, Cindy and Kate) to today's post-Gisele catwalk climate (Daria Werbowy, Natalia Vodianova, Karolina Kurkova and Gemma Ward—surnames required), every important model was declared "It" at one point or another by the fashion powers-that-be. (Paging Vogue editor Anna Wintour.)

To make things even more interesting, the It mentality also made its way to high society and its surrounding neighborhoods. Without warning, anyone who looked good enough and was photographed with the right people at the right parties often enough was declared an It girl (Amanda Hearst of the Hearst publishing fortune) or an It boy (Fabian Basabe, New York party boy and new boyfriend of Mandy Moore). On both sides of the Atlantic, even artists (Vanessa Beecroft, "Show," 1998), writers (Zadie Smith, "White Teeth," 2000), chefs (Rocco DiSpirito, 2003) and athletes (Maria Sharapova, circa now) were given the ominous "Ones to Watch" appel-

WHEN/ E2



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OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

IT'S NICE to know I have friends who wake me up at the splinter of dawn with doomsday-laden text messages like, "It's all happening. The end of the world is near. First, the South Asian tsunami. And now, they've done a remake of the song Xanadu." Along with William Hung's female reincarnation at "American Idol's" season premiere, such are signs of the Apocalypse that weren't hinted at in the Book of Revelations.

The past few weeks have been a surreal revelation indeed. The world seems to have spun off its poles and served up deadly combinations of the four natural elements. Landslides in the Quezon province. Tsunamis wiping out thousands of lives in what is now touted as the worst natural disaster in living history. Snow falling on the unlikely cities of L.A. and Las Vegas. The fire that raged in Boracay. And most recently still, the fresh earthquakes that jolted Indonesia's Eastern Sulawesi Island and India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

It's inevitable then, and part of human nature, to seek answers to explain the mysterious, back-to-back-to-back rampage. New Age mystics believe it to be part of the earth's cleansing as we ease into the Age of Aquarius. Some paranoid Christians are already proclaiming it to be the end of the world. Democrats joke that it's all a backlash against Bush's victory (likewise a disaster in itself). Meteorologists in CNN are tempering public panic with science-based explanations, citing the El Niño phenomenon, and concluding, "the world is not falling apart...yet."

I truly doubt the "end of the world"—at least in its dramatic conveyances—is at hand (I'll give you a heads up if I see four Horsemen galloping through the streets of Makati), but for some people, it may just as well be.

Tropical depressions

I was watching the news on some of the Boraceños who lost their homes in the recent inferno. Many of them had no choice but to move to the beach with their paltry, salvaged belongings, still shaken by the tragedy. A teary-eyed woman by the beach said, *"Dahil sa kasalanan ng isa, nawalan kami ng hanapbuhay."* (Because of one person's fault, we lost our livelihood.)

One of my German friends based on the island e-mailed me about his experience in trying to snuff out the fire in his resort. He was first trying to carry water from the beach, until it had become too cumbersome to run back and forth to douse the flames.

He recalls, "Later, I was in the resort trying to work against the fire. It was good luck that there were two big swimming pools and the resort owners brought many big pumps and many people helped and worked very hard together, so the fire could not get over the wall. We needed almost all the water of the swimming pools in about two hours. Me, I am only hurt a little bit in my left arm but it's getting better."

From one Asian tropic to another, this time of even more devastating dimensions. A good friend of mine had recently quit his job and took the opportunity to tag along with a documentary film crew to Banda Aceh, Sumatra. (The docu, "Missing in Aceh," was aired over GMA 7 last Jan. 24 on I-Witness.) It was a week that virtually changed his entire perspective on life as he knew it.

I saw photos of his sobering sojourn and, hyperbole aside, I had to repress my gag reflex from churning out the *kare-kare* I had for dinner. To add to the thousand words that those disturbing pictures painted, were his stories of the living envying the dead.

"I went there wanting a new experience and expecting the worst. I realized that I was so naive," he confessed. "I was so *jahe* that I couldn't even remember how to say *'Terimah kasi'* or 'thank you' in Indonesian, because I kept thinking of *tiramisu*. Growing up with my kind of lifestyle, and then to be thrust in that setting—changed everything."

REMOTE location

An excerpt from his blog, http://banda-aceh.blogspot.com reads, "There is no psychological preparation you can do once you see the devastation. It is massive, unreal, unimaginable... everyone lost someone. Just yesterday, 3,000 bodies were recovered in the Banda Aceh area alone... people, be thankful with what you have now. People over there lost everything—their friends, family, livelihood, property, etc. So don't waste the time that you have. The Achenese didn't expect this coming. No one did. You never know what may happen the next second."

> It doesn't need a tectonic shift in our lifestyles either, rather, a slight shift in perspective

Shifts

In spite of what we experience vicariously from what we see or read on the news, or what we hear from friends, all this may still seem so far removed from us. We can still shut our TV sets, or mind-shift to our regularly programmed lifestyles, and make all the "bad vibes" disappear. We still have that choice.

And there's nothing wrong with that. It isn't the end of the world, after all, and it would be a great tragedy to channel monumental despair into our own lives. Yet an even greater tragedy would be to go on without so much as a reflection on the cataclysmic shifts in the lives of the thousands of people spared from the disaster—those who have to somehow pick up the scraps and fragments and miraculously find a way to move on.

It doesn't need a tectonic shift in our lifestyles either, rather, a slight shift in perspective. It's about imbibing a healthy dose of awareness, an ounce of sobriety and sensitivity in our daily ventures. When placed in the proper perspective, many of our concerns become trite compared to what many people all over the world go are enduring at this very moment.

The other day, for example, going music hunting in a record store, I was extremely annoyed when I asked for the CD of Scissor Sisters and the saleslady brought me a copy of "Edward Scissorhands" instead. Incensed at the snafu, and at the peak of my hormonal cycle to boot, I was about ready to unleash my fury at the poor girl—and then realized how inconsequential my problem was in comparison to the despair that thousands of others face today.

Our never-ending appetites for worldly objects deemed to enhance our lives should be tempered with the reminder that there are those out there who've been stripped of everything they've had, notably the people they loved the most. The sky hasn't fallen yet, but for them, it may as well have.

And with that perspective, it's but natural to be infinitely more appreciative of what we do have. Something to think about when you're reaching for a second helping of tiramisu.

Email the author at: inca_orange@yahoo.com.

When 'It' hit the fan

From page E1

lation, a slight reworking of the word It.

'It' rhymes with sh...

Soon enough, having or being It became a sad cliché. Anyone with a pulse was unexpectedly It, which revealed a shallower and not-so-flattering gauge of Zeitgeist.

In Manila, I believe this It turned to shit when a not-young singer decided to call her last concert "It Girl," to honor the foremost female recording artists of our time. (I tried to mind my own business but I nearly barfed in my mouth when I saw this "It Girl" concert billboard.) Yes, Pops Fernandez single-handedly gave all It girls a reason to finally hang their tiaras and turn lesbian. Tragic.

NOT DOHERTY. Shannyn Sossamon of "The Rules of Attraction"

What does this mean for genuine It people? For one thing, it's not so cool now to be It. "When you have an economic boom, you see the diva come out in everyone. People start exaggerating and get really showy. Now we want to get away from that kind of posturing," said Gordon Hull of Surface 2 Air, a Paris-based fashion and art collective, in a 2003 issue of Nylon Magazine.

These days, when lifestyle and fashion trends point to everything perky, perfect, pulled together and proper, it seems that everyone—and I mean everyone—wants to be perceived as the prom queen or king. And when a pop culture movement reaches its saturation point, it becomes tedious.

John Demas, creative director of the avant-garde New York City boutique Seven, says, "Trendsetters now have an ironic, almost defensive, attitude that defines their taste. As soon as a [shift] becomes known enough that media gives it a name and elects a key element, it becomes undesirable and we run from it like hell." So much has already been said about It-dom; the Anti-It now deserves our attention.

Tag, you're anti-'It'

Aside from It girls and boys, there are other people with the look, the attitude and the energy. Most of the time, they, too, are spectacles. However, you won't find them onstage, but off, almost press shy. These indie sensations are what I call the Anti-It army.

Instead of sugar and spice, anti-It individuals are not concerned about broken rules and have a more rebellious nature. Sugar and vice, if you will. Christina Ricci circa 1998, Shannyn Sossamon in "The Rules of Attraction" and Jake Gyllenhaal in "Donnie Darko" are just some of the young Hollywood archetypes that come to mind when talk turns to quirkiness and a streetwise state of mind.

Another big part of this undercurrent railing against the desire for perfection is fashion. Coexisting with the current crop of Brazilian bombshells, Eastern European hotties and other runway giraffes are models who make the most of their imperfections. Girl/boy prototype Omahyra Mota, high-born-but-not-posh Stella Tennant and freakishly long-limbed Jacquetta Wheeler are still super-in-demand despite their not-so-classic features.

And classic doesn't quite describe the designers that fall under the Anti-It category either: Dutch duo Viktor & Rolf, UK genius Alexander McQueen and Japanese legend Rei Kawakubo. Another name is cool Kiwi designer Karen Walker, a fashion-forward fave and the toast of London Fashion Week's off-schedule scene.

The Karen Walker chick is not a brooch-hoarding princess but is more of the bad-apple variety. "I don't design for It girls but for anti-It girls," she said, referring to past collections which paid homage to a '50s prom queen who broke curfew and a camper who was carried away by a yeti. Her "I'll do it my way" spirit is far from the safety of Carolina Herrera, Ralph Lauren and Michael Kors. (Also see: Marni, Dries Van Noten and personal favorites Agnès B. and Filippa K.)

Dichotomy

Alternatives to Its who are famous just for being famous, Anti-Its are meritocratic versions of Barbie and Ken. Similarly, anti-It girls and anti-It boys are not contrarian out of spite. They are different because they do not go for obvious choices and instead cultivate interests that are on the hidden end of the iceberg.

And more than being mere opposites, these Anti-Its complement their It counterparts, balance things out and make matters more interesting. They have a certain dangerous, jewel-in-the-rough appeal that makes them as, if not more, remarkable than the Its. However, these individuals are not entirely above-it-all as to be boring.

As we approach the halfway mark of the '00s, I think it's time to focus on the Anti-It concept. Like a Superman-Bizarro contrast, the following chart is a dichotomy that doesn't intend to replace the reigning Its with their grittier equivalents. To be more precise, it's a capsule presentation of the Anti-It side of pop culture.

The Super! It Chart

'It'		Anti-'It'
Amanda Griffin	**Model/VJ/endorser**	**Sarah Meier**
Greenbelt	**Nightlife hotspot**	The Fort
iPod	**Portable music player**	**iRiver**
ASAP, ABS-CBN 2	**Sunday variety show**	SOP, GMA 7
Jessica Simpson	**MTV siblings**	**Ashlee Simpson**
Gwyneth Paltrow	**Academy Award nominee**	Cate Blanchett
Vogue	**Fashion rag**	Nylon
Boracay	**Island getaway**	**Siargao**
Must-have	**Mentality**	Just-have
Hermes Birkin	**Fashion accessory**	Mulberry Roxy
Manolo Blahnik	**Shoe**	Emma Hope
Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, Dolce & Gabbana	**Designing duo**	Dan and Dean Caten, DSquared2
Gucci	**Powerhouse label**	Marc Jacobs
Transparency	**Sexual attitude**	Ambiguity
Rissa Samson	**Female model**	**Raya Manaquil**
Bront Javier	**Male model**	**Corey Wills**
Richard Gutierrez	**Celebrity dude**	Geoff Eigenmann
Heart Evangelista	**Celebrity chick**	Karel Marquez
Super	**Saturday habit**	Super

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In Iloilo City, a colorful festival takes place every last Sunday of January called *Dinagyang*. Derived from the *Ilonggo* word *dagyang* which means 'to make merry', *Dinagyang* is characterized by costumed warriors painted in black dancing to hypnotic drumbeats while paying homage to the Sto. Niño.

Globe's roving regional roadshow Intensity G recently dropped in on the *Dinagyang* Festival to join Globe subscribers in Iloilo in their merry-making. Through exciting events such as concerts, parties and sales blitzes, Intensity G was able to inject its unique brand of revelry into the week-long explosion of wild colors and tribal rhythms.

While in Iloilo for the *Diyagyang* festivities, Globe endorser July had a chat with Globe subscriber and active *Cofradia Del Sto. Niño Cebu* member Ma. Flor Muralla. She told July that the word *Dinagyang* was first coined by famous *Ilonggo* writer and radio broadcaster Pacifico Sumagpao Sudario in 1977. She also told the popular Globe 128XL SIM endorser how being a Globe subscriber has helped her immensely. "Dahil napaka-reliable ng signal ng Globe dito sa Iloilo, I can always get in touch with my family and other *Cofradia Del Sto. Niño* members quite easily *kahit saan lugar man ako naroron*, anytime of the day!"

The *Dinagyang* celebrations kicked-off when the Sto. Niño image was borne on a decorative *banca* in a fluvial procession, starting from the mouth of the Iloilo River at Fort San Pedro, winding all the way to the Iloilo provincial capitol. There, the *hermano-hermana mayor*, devotees, and *Ati-Atihan* tribes met the Sto. Niño. With the Sto.Niño leading, the street procession passed through the main roads of the city and ended at San Jose Church, where high mass was then celebrated during the early evening.

As the day drew to a close, Iloilo City's night life began to hum, offering something for every taste from small bars to big nightclubs with several dance floors. Intensity G enhanced this already vibrant nightlife with parties and events at some of the cities hippest and trendiest places. The city's clubbers got their groove on at the Intensity G sponsored parties at Club Verz, MO2, Juan's Bar, Smallville and the *Dinagyang Food Festival.*

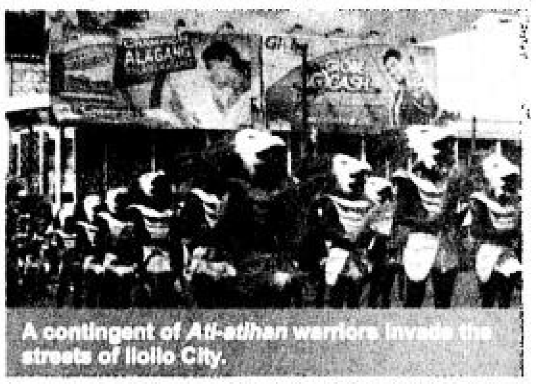
Pumping House and Trance music were the order of the day at Club Verz in Smallville. Over at the nearby MO2, party people danced the night away to the lush, tropical rhythms of Elmer Dado and his percussion ensemble. At the *Dinagyang Food Festival*, music lovers flocked to enjoy the food as well as the healthy serving of great music from Barbie's Cradle, Retrospect and Carlo Aquino Theory. Rocking live music was also sampled at the respective courtyards of MO2, Smallville and Juan's Bar. In all of these events, premium Intensity G merchandise was also given away to the audience.

Other Intensity G crowd drawers in the *Dinagyang* were the various sales blitzes throughout Iloilo City. They provided Globe subscribers with a convenient place to reload with AutoloadMAX or buy Globe Prepaid Call Cards, thus making it possible for visitors and local Globe subscribers to tell their family and friends of their unique *Dinagyang* experience.

By mounting relevant and fun-filled events and giving Globe subscribers a host of innovative Globe services that cater to their needs, Intensity G made a deep and lasting connection with its valued subscribers in Iloilo City. Expect Intensity G to continue spicing up other regional festivals in the coming months.

Ati-atihan warriors let out a big *Hala Bira!* for the Sto. Niño during the *Dinagyang* Festival in Iloilo City.

July admires the excellent craftsmanship of some of the *Ati-atihan* masks on sale at the sidewalks of Iloilo City during the Dinagyang Festival.


A contingent of *Ati-atihan* warriors invade the streets of Iloilo City.

Fans and Globe subscribers alike flock to the Intensity G sales blitz in SM Iloilo to get upclose [illegible] July.

July mans the counter of the Intensity G sales blitz at the Marymart Mall in Iloilo City.

A throng of Globe subscribers at the Intensity G sales blitz in Gaisano Mall get the best cellphone deals in Iloilo City.

The party spirit of an Intensity G event at the MO2 Bar in Iloilo City was made more festive by the presence of July.

July and Globe subscriber Ma. Flor Muralla take a stroll on the grounds of Iloilo City's historic Fort San Pedro.

An Intensity G billboard along the highway affirms Globe's network strength in Iloilo City to passing motorists.

July in one of Iloilo City's most famous landmarks, the Jaro Cathedral.

Crowds at an Intensity G shindig in Smallville are treated to a triple combination of great music, July's funny antics and Intensity G prizes galore.

Intensity G lets loose a big Hala, bira! in Kalibo

Kids donning colorful feathered costumes and marching to rhythmic drumbeats. Old folks grinning widely and bearing Sto. Niño statues; people of all ages covering their faces and bodies with black paint and dancing intensely in the streets. No wonder the Ati-atihan festival has been copied in many other Filipino towns and villages for its sheer energy and the vibrant spectacle it presents. Intensity G joined the festivities in Kalibo, Aklan, home of the original Ati-atihan, with the opening of a new business center and special events for the party goers.

Globe Telecom's new business center at the lower ground floor of Gaisano City shopping center in Kalibo opened on January 12 with a ceremonial blessing and a motorcade through the town. Globe also offered its "Ati-atihan Special" just for the festival period: free cellphones for every Globe plan. More and more Aklanons are now getting connected, thanks to Globe's extensive coverage and innovative services.

At the height of the celebration, two power-packed Intensity G shindigs at the Palmera Poolside Grill and Restaurant added to the glitz and excitement. Kalibo residents jammed to the distinctive beat of the Ill Pride duo's original Ilonggo rap songs on January 14. On the next night, the Cool Grey hip-hop band rocked Kalibo with their cool sounds. Intensity G brought in a special performer from Manila, singer/stand-up comedian Anton Diva, who regaled the audience with spirited versions of popular songs combined with a hearty dose of humor. Trivia games and other activities added to the fun, with winners receiving great Globe freebies and other exciting prizes.

Visitors and Aklan natives alike joined in the merrymaking, which culminated on January 16 with a grand procession in honor of Kalibo's patron, the Sto. Niño. One Kalibo resident says: "*Sa Ati-atihan, walang hindi kasali. Lahat kasama sa kasiyahan!*" With Globe Handyphone, you too can be part of the merriment and be connected nationwide – wherever Filipino culture, traditions, and creativity are showcased, as in the Ati-atihan festival. As Aklanons enthusiastically declare: "*Mabaskog guid ang Globe!*" ("Globe is really strong!")

People from all over Aklan dress up in vivid costumes and join in the *Ati-atihan* revelry.

Intensity G takes Kalibo by storm as more Aklanons get connected with Globe.

It's one big party in Kalibo with Intensity G and the Cool Grey band!

Globe's new business center in Gaisano City is now open to serve Kalibo residents.

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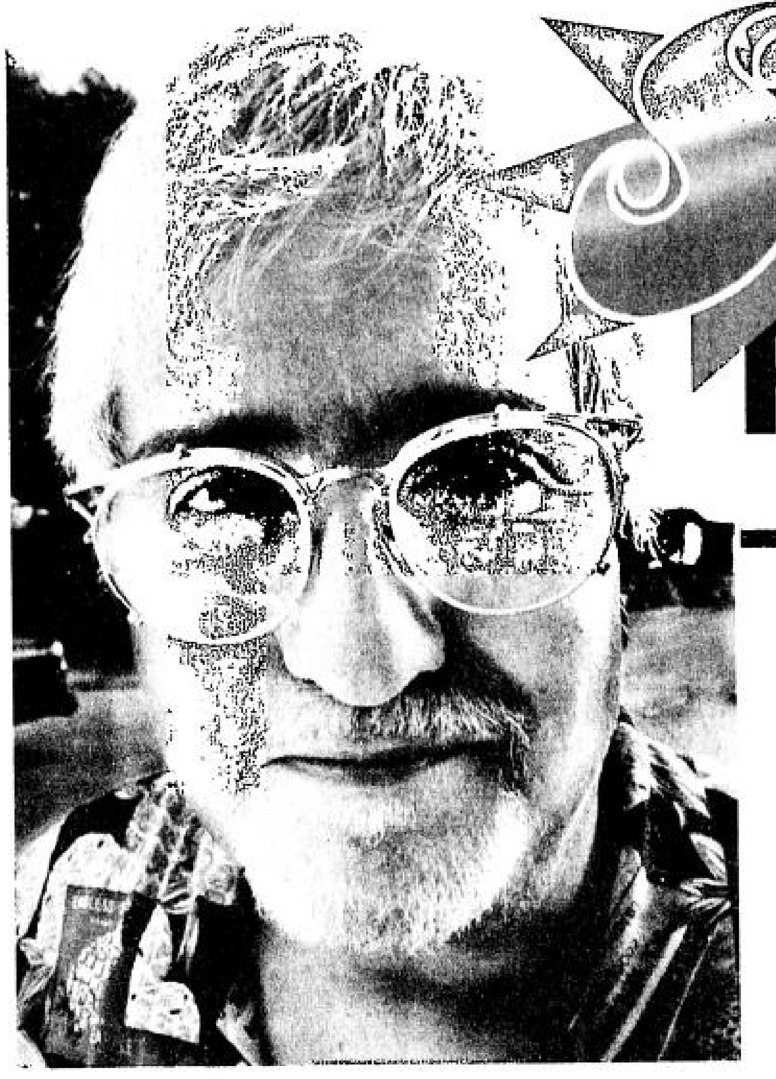
SUPER! SCOOP!

Peque back in the swing—and happy



By Jojo Nones
Photos by Steve Tirona

PEQUE Gallaga is singing a song, almost inaudibly, as he and I wait for photographer Steve Tirona and his guys Albert and Marcus to finish scouting the area for a nice pictorial spot. With the air conditioner on full blast, it's almost painfully cold inside the editing suite of Unitel Studios in Makati but oddly enough, I feel unusually comfortable sitting across one of Philippine cinema's most celebrated filmmakers.

Hearing this master director hum a happy tune somehow gives me the feeling that he's fairly excited about this whole thing, somewhat delighted at all the fuss and attention. But in this side of the world, if you're someone named Peque Gallaga, you deserve more than just fuss and attention.

Multi-media director, screenwriter, and production designer Maurice Ruiz de Luzuriaga Gallaga ingeniously secured a place for himself in cinema history when he made his first solo directorial debut with the now classic "Oro, Plata, Mata" (1982). It accorded him several accolades for Best Director including awards from the Urian, the Manila International Film Festival, and the International

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entertainment
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Japanese cuisine has made transition to Japanese, Italian and American fusion cuisine. Experience a new approach to authentic Japanese cooking preparations at the Maya Kitchen and savor the genuine and modern fusion of dishes from soup to desserts. Check the schedule below and sign up now.

Japanese Fusion: Feb. 5 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Katsu Curry (Tonkatsu with Curry Sauce), Rolled Cabbage Japanese Style, Caesar Salad, Special Tempura (Cheese, Chicken & Beef), Yaki Spaghetti, Niku Jaga (Japanese Beef Adobo), Kani Fried Rice, Grilled Chicken with Fruity Teriyaki sauce, Japanese Minestrone, Sweet Beans Japanese dessert by Chef Seiji Kamura. P1,000.
Brownies Plus: Feb. 5 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Decadence Brownie Heart, Brownie Rhum Balls, Chocolate Chunks, Rocky Road, Date-nuts, Apple Chunks, Chocolate Waffle, Butterscotch Cookies. P750.
Italian Sampler: Feb. 12 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lasagna, Cannelloni, Ravioli, Fettuccine al fresco and pasta sauces (Pesto, Puttanesca, Carbonara) P800.
Pizza-Pizza: Feb. 12 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Chicago-style, Deep Pan Pizza, Mushroom-Tuna Stuffed Pizza Turnover, No-bake Pizza including toppings with costing. P700.
Super Meringue: Feb. 12 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Sylvannas, Canonigo, Sans Rival, Pavlova, Brazo de Mercedes, Lemon-Meringue Pie, Meringue Cookies. P750.
Chinese Dimsum: Feb. 19 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Pork Siomai, Shrimp Siomai (Hakaw), Chicken Feet, Chicken Wings, Pork Spareribs. Bonus; Fried Tofu. P700.
Gulaman Delights: Feb. 19 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Cathedral Window, Coffee Jelly, Almond Jelly, Flavored Panacota, Buko Pandan. P600.
Sarap Pinoy Cooking: Feb. 26 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Sisig, Batchoy, Bagnet, Crispy Pata, Bicol Express and Kilawin. P750.
Cakeshop Specialties: Feb. 26 (Sat) 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Caramel Crunch, White Forest Cake, Chocolate Custard, Crema de Fruta, Tiramisu, Sacher Torte. P750.

CERTIFICATE COURSES (Limited enrolment. Pre-registration required.)

Cooking I: Feb. 1-4 or 15-18 (T-F) 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; Nutrition and Nutritional Cooking; stocks, soups and sauces and its 1001 application to poultry, fish, shellfish, fruits and vegetables; common herbs and spices; purchasing; marketing and proper storage; menu planning; simple garnish and plate presentation. Plus actual cooking workshop on the preparation of dishes from appetizer to dessert. P4,000.
Baking I: Feb. 1-4 or 15-18 (T-F) 2:00 - 5:30 p.m. Basic basics of baking including techniques applied to preparation of bread, quickbread, pies, cakes and more. P3,000 with free cookbook.
Cooking 2: Feb. 8-11 (T-F) 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Review of Basic Culinary Principles; Meal Management; Knowledge of Herbs, Spices and Condiments; Basic Maintenance and Preservation of Food (Proper Receiving, Storage and Preparation); Menu Planning, Kitchen Accounting and Recipe Formulation; Actual Workshop on International Cuisine, Ethnic Cooking, Hors d'oeuvre, Salad, Cooked/Cured/Prepared foods and Quick Desserts; Market Basket. Free Maya Kitchen's Mix & Match 3 cookbook. P5,000.
Professional Japanese Cooking (especially designed for land and sea-based cooks and restaurateurs): Feb. 8-11 (T-F) 2-6 p.m. Coverage: Preparation of traditional Japanese menu breakfast, lunch and dinner. Recipes include: Rice Dishes (Nishoku don; Gomaku Zosui, Onigiri, Curry Rice); Salads (Stick Salad Shoyoyu; Yakinasu, Hoenso Goma ae, Harusame); Main Dishes (Katsu Sand-Tonkatsu, Wafu Spaghetti, Tofu Gratan, Shioiyaki, Oden, Shishamo, Agedashi Dofu; and Soups (Yasai, Wakame Tofu Misoshiru) by Chef Seiji Kamura P5000.
Cake Decorating (Basic): Feb. 19 & 26 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Lecture-workshop on fundamentals of cake decorating: coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate, sugar icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making, bunching. P3,000.
Baking 2: Feb. 22-25 (T-F) 2:00 - 5:30 p.m. Baking ingredients and their functions, baker's percentage / math, commercial methods used in preparing breads, pies, cakes, pastries and bakery products including costing, batching applicable to bakery operation. P3,000.

For inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays thru Saturdays) at 8th floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1185 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at *mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph*

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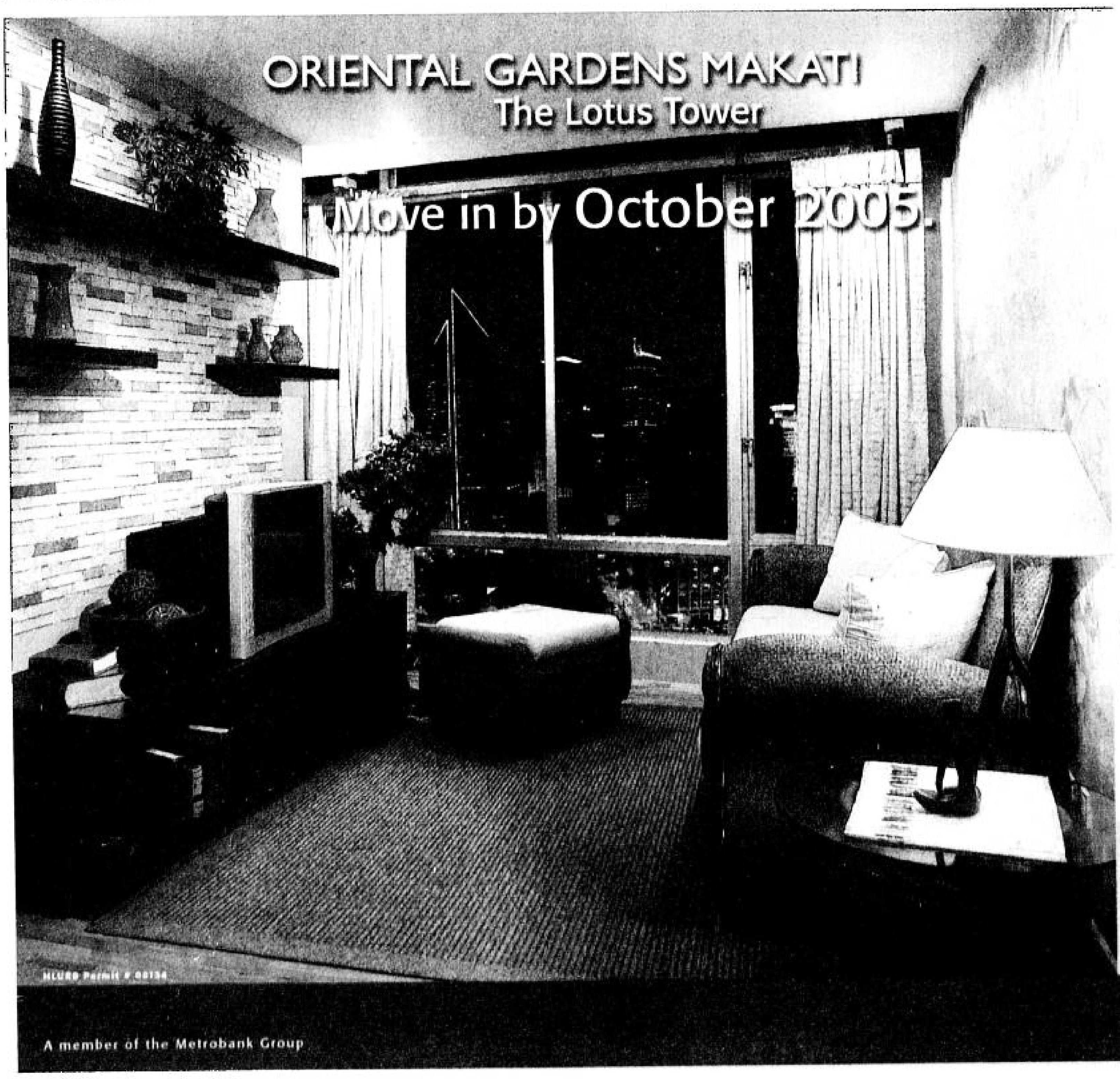

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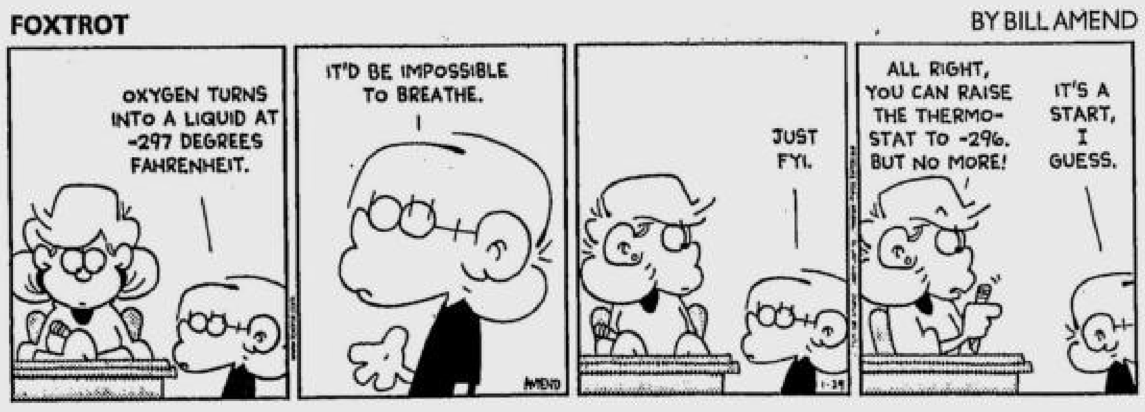
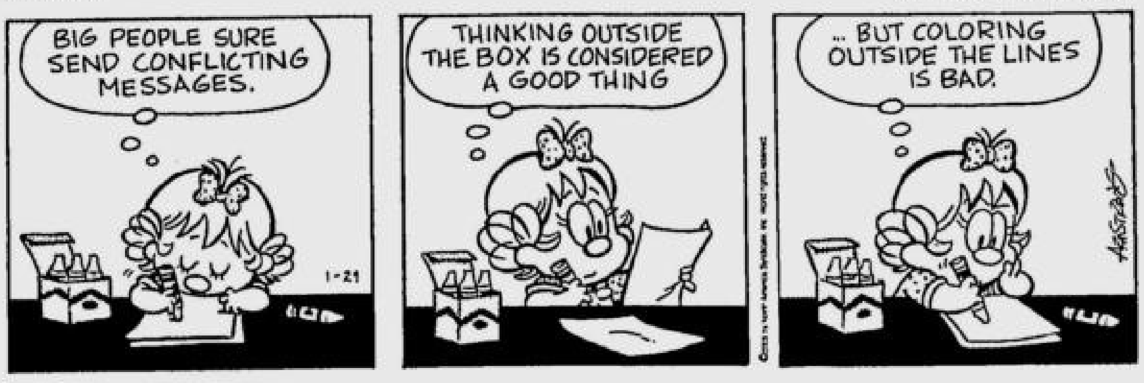
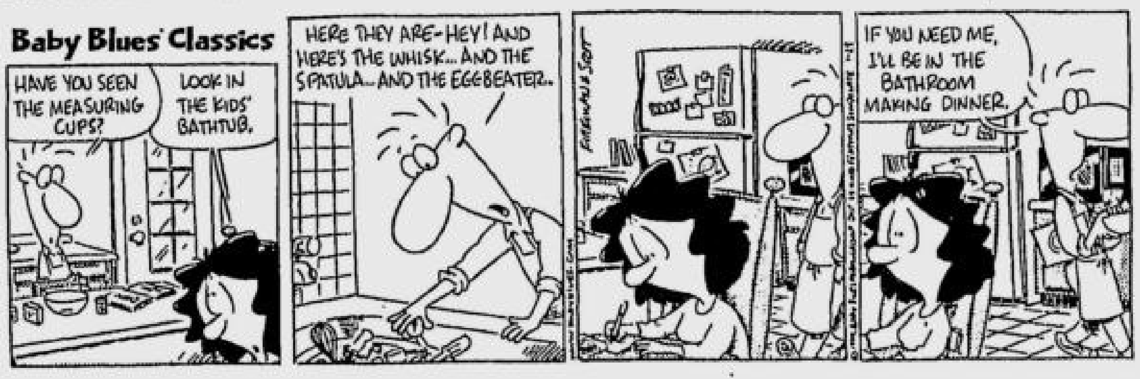

OXYGEN TURNS INTO A LIQUID AT -297 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT.
IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO BREATHE.
JUST FYI.
ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN RAISE THE THERMOSTAT TO -296. BUT NO MORE!
IT'S A START, I GUESS.
AMEND
1-29

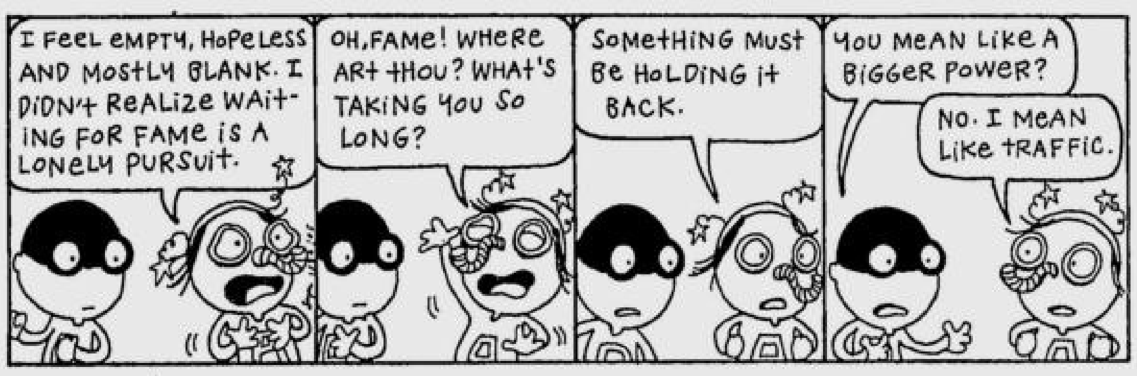
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BIG PEOPLE SURE SEND CONFLICTING MESSAGES.
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IS CONSIDERED A GOOD THING
... BUT COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES IS BAD.
1-21
ARMSTRONG

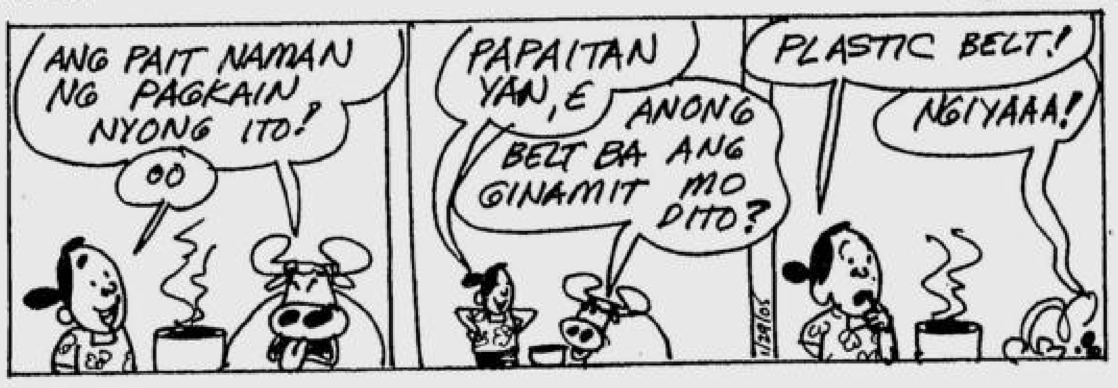
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


Baby Blues Classics
HAVE YOU SEEN THE MEASURING CUPS?
LOOK IN THE KIDS' BATHTUB.
HERE THEY ARE- HEY! AND HERE'S THE WHISK... AND THE SPATULA... AND THE EGGBEATER.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT
IF YOU NEED ME, I'LL BE IN THE BATHROOM MAKING DINNER.

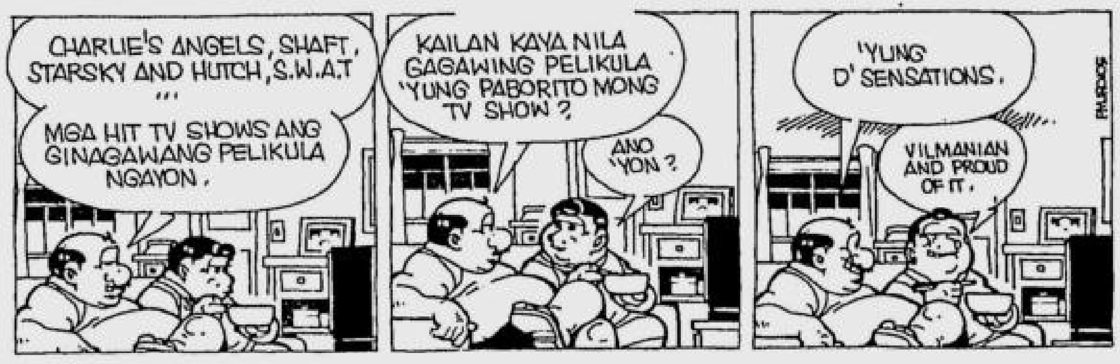
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I FEEL EMPTY, HOPELESS AND MOSTLY BLANK. I DIDN'T REALIZE WAITING FOR FAME IS A LONELY PURSUIT.
OH, FAME! WHERE ART THOU? WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG?
SOMETHING MUST BE HOLDING IT BACK.
YOU MEAN LIKE A BIGGER POWER?
NO. I MEAN LIKE TRAFFIC.

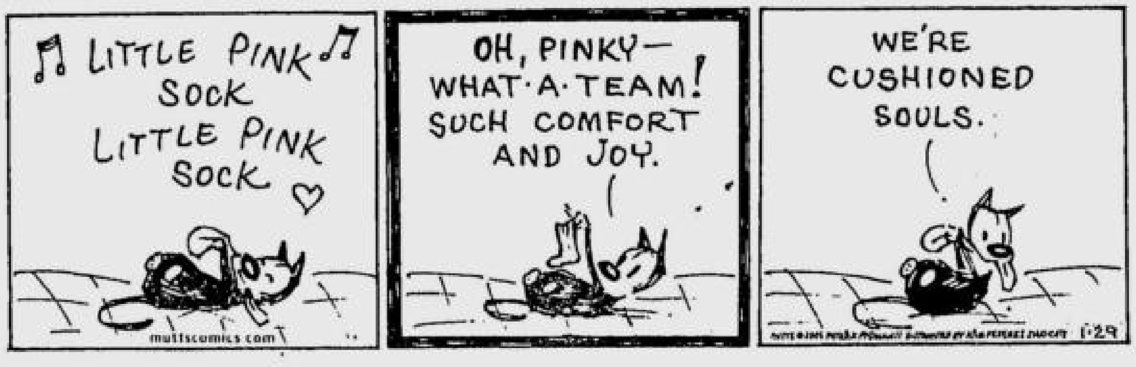
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANG PAIT NAMAN NG PAGKAIN NYONG ITO!
OO
PAPAITAN YAN, E
ANONG BELT BA ANG GINAMIT MO DITO?
PLASTIC BELT!
NGIYAAA!
1/29/05

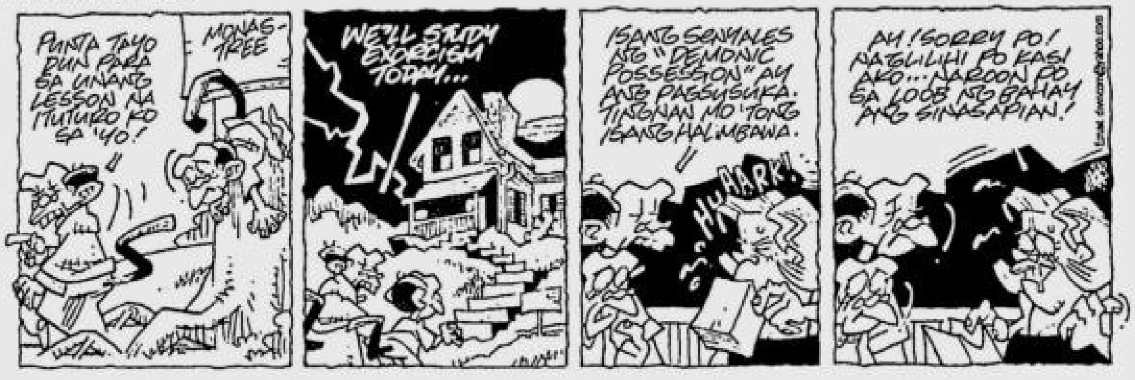
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


CHARLIE'S ANGELS, SHAFT, STARSKY AND HUTCH, S.W.A.T ...
MGA HIT TV SHOWS ANG GINAGAWANG PELIKULA NGAYON.
KAILAN KAYA NILA GAGAWING PELIKULA 'YUNG PABORITO MONG TV SHOW?
ANO 'YON?
'YUNG D' SENSATIONS.
VILMANIAN AND PROUD OF IT.
PMJUNIOR

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LITTLE PINK SOCK LITTLE PINK SOCK
OH, PINKY— WHAT·A·TEAM! SUCH COMFORT AND JOY.
WE'RE CUSHIONED SOULS.
muttscomics.com
1·29

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


PUNTA TAYO DUN PARA SA UNANG LESSON NA ITUTURO KO SA 'YO!
MONAS-TREE
WE'LL STUDY EXORCISM TODAY...
ISANG SENYALES NG "DEMONIC POSSESSION" AY ANG PAGSUSUKA. TINGNAN MO 'TONG ISANG HALIMBAWA.
HUARK!
AY! SORRY PO! NAGLILIHI PO KASI AKO... NAROON PO SA LOOB NG BAHAY ANG SINASAPIAN!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're fun-loving. People like that about you. You have high ideals, and you fight for what you believe. You have great faith in humanity. You are tolerant, open-minded and eager to expand your understanding of life. Emotionally, you're complex and very private. You are always courageous. This year, exciting new avenues open up for you.

Birthdate of: Oprah Winfrey, talk-show host/producer/actress; Teresa Teng, singer; Tom Selleck, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): In the next few weeks, conversations with friends will be particularly important. Contact with groups will bring you new information and exciting changes.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Expect to hear important news from your boss in the next few weeks. Similarly, conversations with parents are very significant at this time. Keep your ears open!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You have an opportunity to expand your knowledge about something, perhaps religion or politics. You certainly are going to learn something fresh and new in the month ahead.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your ability to research financial matters and red-tape details about inheritances, estates and insurance matters is very good now. Dig right in!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Conversations with partners and close friends are quite illuminating in the next few weeks. People tell you things you didn't know. Similarly, you will open up to them as well.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might be talking to people at work much more in the next few weeks. This could involve work associates or members of the general public. Be clear in your communications.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're full of wonderful, creative ideas now. In the month ahead, all kinds of exciting, artistic opportunities exist for you. Why not make some of these ideas a reality?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Family conversations are quite eventful now and in the next few weeks. It's important to share your views with others. Their feedback might surprise you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): For whatever reason, you'll be busier in the next few weeks. You also might be studying, reading and writing much more as well. (You love learning!)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Suddenly, you're starting to get tons of moneymaking ideas. Don't be afraid to share these with others. They'll be popping up for the next four to six weeks. Write them down.

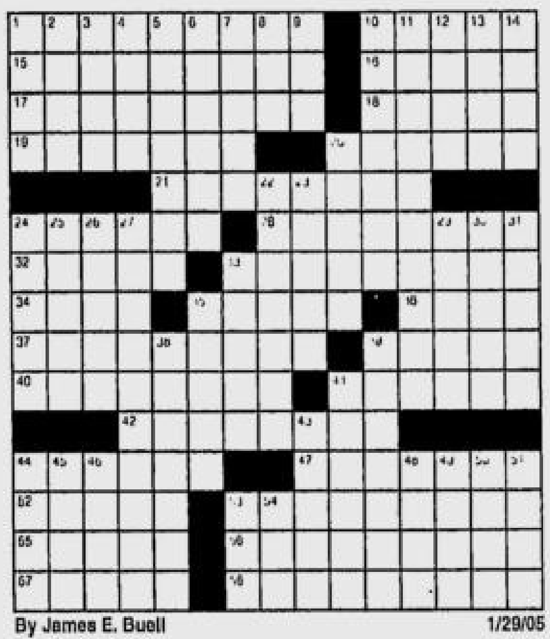
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Because Mercury is now in your sign, you will feel an increasing need to talk to everyone. You'll also be full of bright ideas! (Your sign can have flashes of genius.).

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): In the month ahead, you can do excellent research on something. You might also discover secrets and hidden information. It's a good time to deal with the government and large institutions.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Kind of pop
10 Memorable Poitier role
15 German shepherd film star
16 Deli sandwich choice
17 Turned off
18 Singer Bonnie
19 Result of too much lying?
20 Hides behind words
21 Tape over
24 Social science
28 Chamber pieces
32 Yogi's posture
33 Forest remnant
34 Hide
35 Quivers with rage
36 Peruvian of yore
37 Clinton's Ditch, so-called
39 Sacred song sung a capella
40 Montgomery Clift film
41 Has a feeling
42 Reef explorers' devices
44 Tenant
47 Of a certain fraternal order
52 Twin __ suspension
53 Sally Tessio in "The Godfather"
55 Elbows on the table?
56 Kathleen Turner film
57 Gets in the pot
58 Photographer's request

DOWN
1 Fiddler, e.g.
2 Make angry
3 Tennyson lady
4 Old-time actor Roscoe
5 One of the Balearic Islands
6 Catches
7 Furred swimmer
8 Fizzle out
9 Moreover
10 Matadors
11 More than that
12 Sailor's jail
13 Memory measure
14 Match components
20 Quarters
22 Set aside
23 Fisherman's basket
24 Perp's plan
25 Grenoble's department
26 Legally sound
27 National highway
29 Half-pints
30 Run the show
31 Gaiters
33 Receiver part
35 Lean toward
38 Movie theaters
39 Handel masterwork
41 Indo-European tongue
43 Polishing material
44 Philbin's TV partner
45 Israeli diplomat Abba
46 Bird haven
48 Look of a lecher
49 Iditarod terminus
50 Wedding vows
51 Arrived
53 Buffoon
54 Arthur of "The Golden Girls"



By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL

1/29/05

Friday's Puzzle Solved

P	O	S	H		A	C	H	Y		C	H	I	R	P
A	M	I	E		M	O	U	E		H	O	R	U	S
T	O	L	D		P	O	M	P	O	U	S	A	S	S
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C	H	E	S	H	I	R	E	C	A	T		E	S	S
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P	A	P	E	R	T	I	G	E	R		R	I	T	E
A	R	E	N	A		D	I	E	M		A	N	N	E
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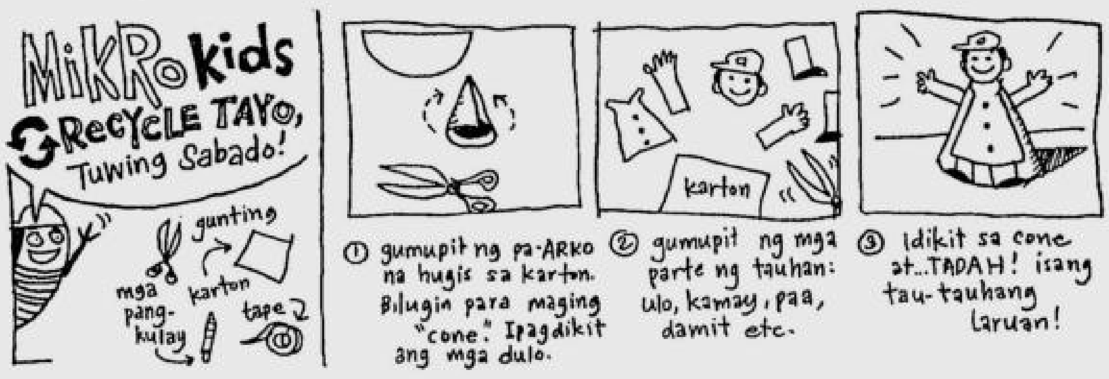
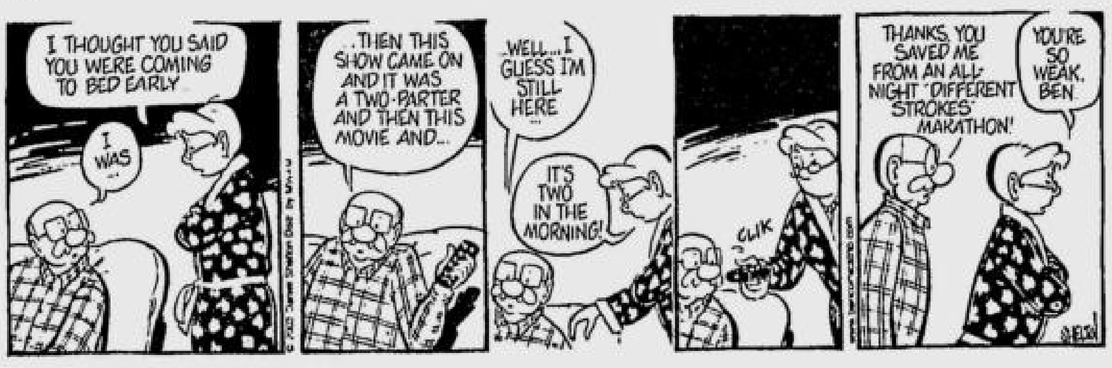
1/29/05

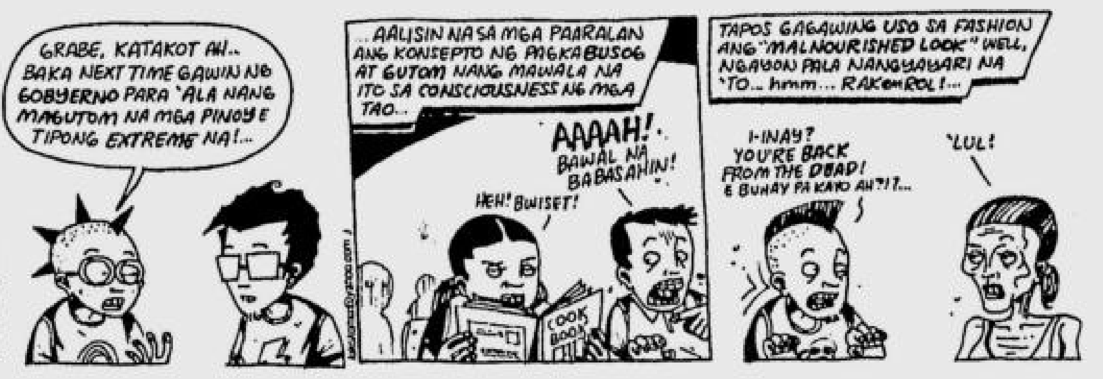
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRo Kids
RECYCLE TAYO, Tuwing Sabado!
gunting
karton
mga pang-kulay
tape
karton
① gumupit ng pa-ARKO na hugis sa karton. Bilugin para maging "cone." Ipagdikit ang mga dulo.
② gumupit ng mga parte ng tauhan: ulo, kamay, paa, damit etc.
③ Idikit sa cone at...TADAH! isang tau-tauhang laruan!

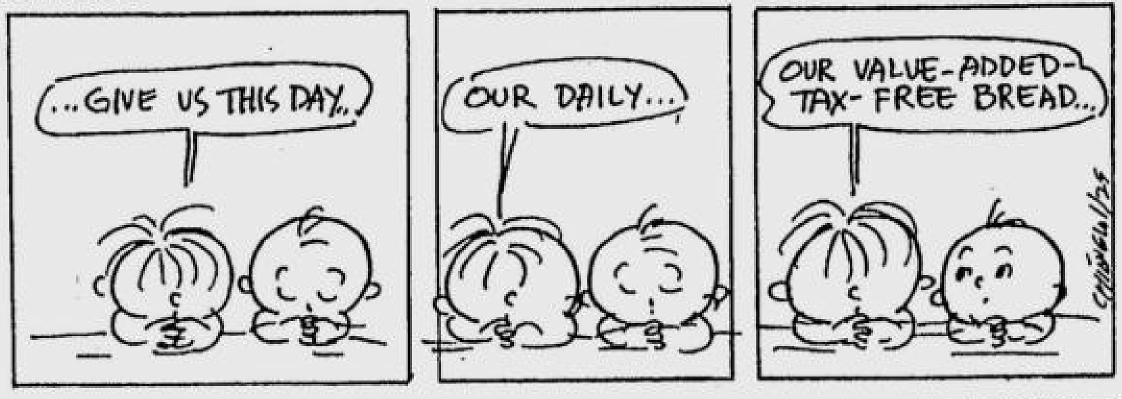
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE COMING TO BED EARLY
I WAS
...THEN THIS SHOW CAME ON AND IT WAS A TWO-PARTER AND THEN THIS MOVIE AND...
...WELL...I GUESS I'M STILL HERE
IT'S TWO IN THE MORNING!
CLIK
THANKS, YOU SAVED ME FROM AN ALL-NIGHT "DIFFERENT STROKES" MARATHON!
YOU'RE SO WEAK, BEN.
SHELTON

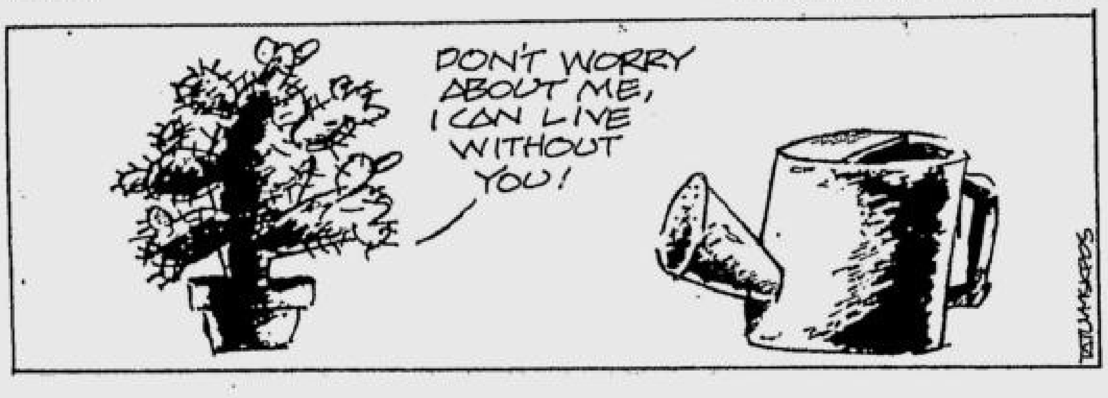
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


GRABE, KATAKOT AH.. BAKA NEXT TIME GAWIN NG GOBYERNO PARA 'ALA NANG MAGUTOM NA MGA PINOY E TIPONG EXTREME NA!...
...AALISIN NA SA MGA PAARALAN ANG KONSEPTO NG PAGKABUSOG AT GUTOM NANG MAWALA NA ITO SA CONSCIOUSNESS NG MGA TAO...
AAAAH! BAWAL NA BABASAHIN!
HEH! BWISET!
COOK BOOK
TAPOS GAGAWING USO SA FASHION ANG "MALNOURISHED LOOK" WELL, NGAYON PALA NANGYAYARI NA 'TO... hmm... RAKENROL!...
I-INAY? YOU'RE BACK FROM THE DEAD! E BUHAY PA KAYO AH?!?...
'LUL!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

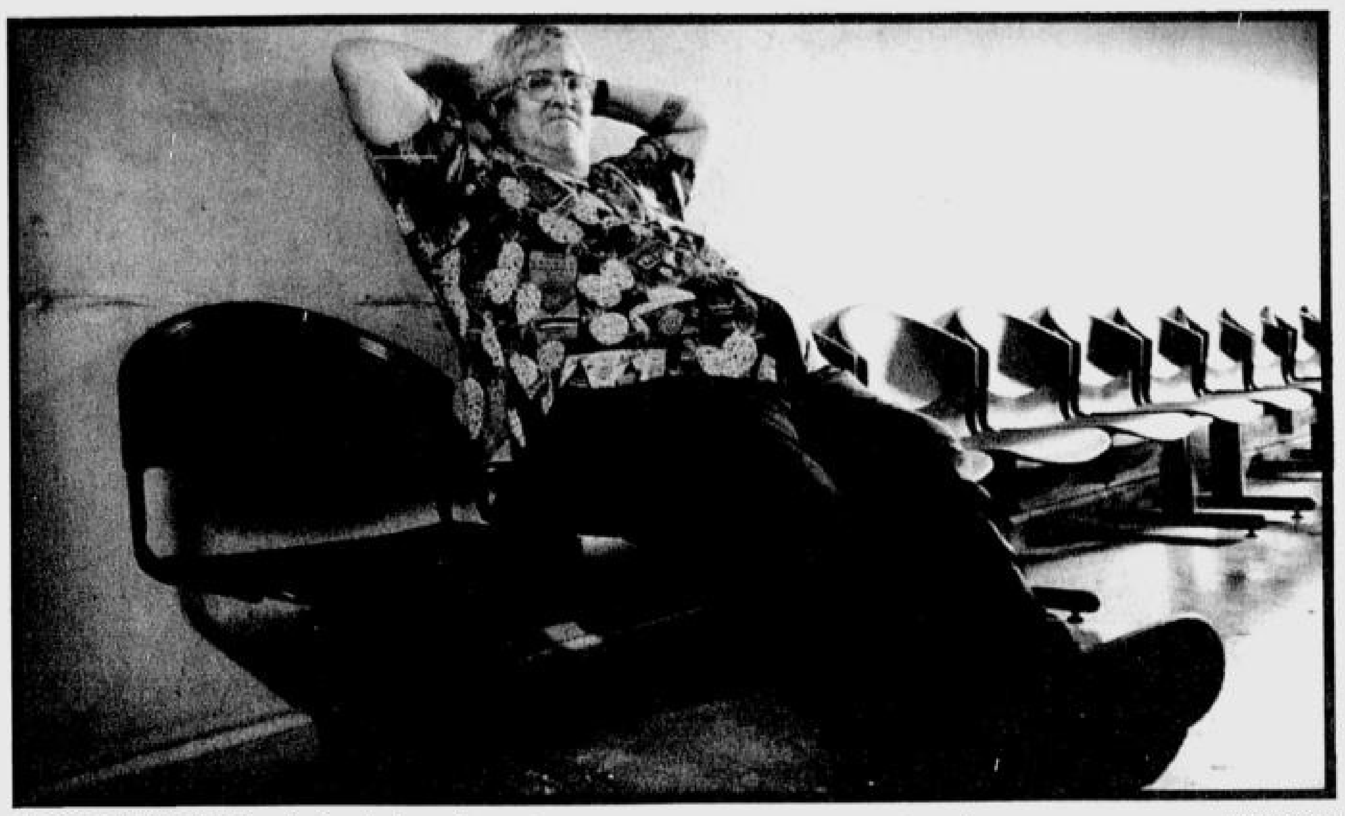

...GIVE US THIS DAY..
OUR DAILY...
OUR VALUE-ADDED-TAX-FREE BREAD...
CHIONGLO 1/25

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I CAN LIVE WITHOUT YOU!
TATUMPAPU

The Dr. Frankenstein of local film

By Wanggo Gallaga



PEQUE GALLAGA. Director's cut above the rest

STEVE TIRONA

WHEN my Dad is in town, I'd find ways and means to get away from responsibilities to be able to spend time with him. We'd have dinner as a family and then off we'd go to his room where in the freezing cold, he'd tell me about everything that is going on with him and vice versa.

But tonight is different. There is something between us that makes the conversation a little rigid. There is something between us that makes the conversation a little self-conscious. Between us is a cassette recorder.

Smoke signals

Suddenly, our usual discussion's have changed for this one interview. My questions sound different and I don't interrupt; he takes more time to answer, I'm asking questions I already know the answers to and he's smoking a cigarette when he shouldn't be. He took one from my pack while I was working the cassette recorder and making sure it works. We struggle a bit, and I mean that in the physical sense, as I try to take the cigarette away from him and he tries to keep it, taking another puff while I'm reaching out for it. "This is my interview persona," he says and I reply, "Okay, but this is going in the article!"

Pinoy Blonde

I'm thinking of the first question. What would it be since I've known Pinoy Blonde from the very beginning? I read the first draft of the script back in the mid 90s when the script about pop culture and movies didn't even have cell phones in it. A quick re-write was needed last year when the possibility of being produced came up with a meeting with Tony Gloria of Unitel Pictures. The new updated version of the script has kept up with the times, now the characters use cell phones instead of pagers, the reference for movies include films that were made last year and now includes even foreign films (the original only paid homage to local films) and the new script was shorter, tighter and funnier.

Indie style

When he was in town to shoot the film, I visited him often, and even went to the set. Except for one scene, it was all done in one location, an abandoned building that was practically falling apart. But it was perfect because each floor was converted to what location was needed. For most of the 12 days, they shot there in one location keeping the budget small. After all, my Dad, after over 20 years in the film-making industry has decided to go indie-style.

And so it's weird to need to ask him any questions; I was there while it happened. We would talk about it from the moment he showed me the script, to the time he told me he was going to be doing the movie with Unitel all the way until now as he goes back and forth from Bacolod to Manila to check up on the editing and even now, sitting in his living room (not his bedroom, like it should be if it were a normal conversation) and interviewing him for the scoop on Pinoy Blonde.

Rough cuts

He's going to show me the rough cut in a few days, something he has always dreaded doing. When he first started out, he always hated the rough cut. There was the movie and without the effects, the sound, the color grading, the movie lays before him like a cadaver. He hates it. It used to depress him. But this time, with this movie, he is excited. It is a difficult script and already, at the rough cut alone, it already looks great. He tells me he hasn't been this excited over a movie since Scorpio Nights.

At the same time, of all his works, this is his most collaborative. My Dad has always been a collaborationist, not a collaborator (his words, not mine) especially when it comes to direction, writing, acting and cinematography. He felt his specialty as a director has always been in allowing people to contribute their ideas and taking the ones that work and applying it to the film. But the post-production, from editing to the music, has always been very hands-on Peque Gallaga. But this time, he decided to let it go. He is working with an editor he has never worked with before, Mike de Castro and composer Minco Fabregas and their energy has been more than helpful. In fact, he lets them play with the material and he just makes sure they don't get carried away.

Casting call

And the movie itself is so ambitious. It's a movie about movies, big effects, homages to different films from Quentin Tarantino and John Woo, Ishmael Bernal to Lino Brocka. The cast is superb with Jaime Fabregas, Ricky Davao, Eddie Garcia and cameos by Cherry Pie Picache, Mark Gil and Michael De Mesa, Cherie Gil, Richard Gomez, Richard Gutierrez, Ara Mina and the list goes on. But what my Dad is extremely impressed with is the talent of its two leads—Epi and Boy 2 Quizon. My Dad has never wanted to work with big stars because he can't stand accommodating their crazy schedules in an attempt to make the budget something easier to work with. But on his indie-style attempt, he's working with the best and all for free.

I meet him in Unitel to watch the rough cut of his film and I am floored with laughter. I'm usually pretty severe with my Dad's work. I tend to nitpick. What can I do? I know him. But it is such a joy to see my father work again.

In front of the computer screen, he begins to turn this "cadaver" of a film to life. Fixing the editing, explaining where the music comes in and what kind, what kind of colors are coming in. And I can see it. I can start to see it.

He's like Dr. Frankenstein, taking all the ideas and contributions and putting it together, an amalgam of different popular culture references and movies of other directors and this film, this mixture of so many things could probably be a disaster. But I'd like to think I'm an authority on my own father's skills. He's going to turn this monster into something so awe-inspiring that he'd be called "mad" as well as a "genius."

It's an ambitious project and he's aware that this won't be something so easily accepted by the general viewing public. Most of these things will go over people's heads. But he's having fun. While Tony Gloria knows that they won't have a big hit with this very substantial film, he knows its good work. And that's what my Dad loves about Tony Gloria, his belief in the project.

Not a comeback

Deep down inside, I know my Dad is happy. He doesn't consider his five-year absence in the film industry as a retirement phase. This isn't his comeback movie; he says "I've never been gone!" It was waiting for the right project that has kept him out of the limelight and now he's back, in fine form and more importantly, enjoying himself.

I tell him I like his film. It came out very well. He thanks me and I kiss him goodbye. He stays to continue working on the editing and I leave Unitel and I receive a text from him. "I'm glad you like it. That really means a lot to me."

Peque goes blonde

EVERYBODY is talking about it. Peque Gallaga is going to make a come-back and it's going to be something completely different. That's the word on the street. That's what everyone is talking about.

His last film was shown in December 1999. But Peque Gallaga hasn't really retired, he just hasn't found the right project.

And what is the right project? Well, apparently he's gone indie, doing a film for a little less than a million, filming on a digital camera with a script he penned years ago. It took him such a long time to find a producer who was willing to take a chance on an off-the-wall kind of film that by the time Tony Gloria asked him for an offbeat script that can be done cheap, Peque Gallaga showed him the script for Pinoy Blonde. Tony Gloria's reaction?

"I like the script. *But kailan mo 'to sinulat? Naka*-pager *pa yung mga* characters!"

The hilarious off-beat movie is the story of two cousins who are both UP film students and whose lives revolve around movies. They get entangled in a mess involving drugs and as their lives are in danger from quirky gangsters and murderers, their reality begins to blur with their imaginations to better handle the current mess they are in.

"When I saw Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction and Reservoir Dogs, I was impressed on how his characters were so articulate," Peque Gallaga says. "Tarantino really created scenes where his characters can just talk. And so I wanted to make that sort of film, where it is very talk-y and the characters are very articulate."

He tells me he promised Tony Gloria to do this film very cheaply. He worked on High Definition, (which is a cheaper digital substitute for film) and decreased his budget to make the cost way lower than normal. He scheduled it that it would be shot for only 9 days. When the producer himself would visit the set and do his mathematics, he allowed my Dad an additional 12 days. "If we are going to make this film, let's do it right," my Dad says quoting Tony.

When he was here in October of 2004 to do the movie, he would happily relate how he had gotten most of the actors to work for free or for a much smaller price. Of course, most of them are playing cameos but if it is a movie about movies, why not have the biggest names in the industry be a part of it.

The two Quizons playing the lead are amazing. Despite having to share scenes with the most incredible actors of the industry, my Dad says, "Epi and Boy 2 don't get swallowed. They hold their own." While watching the rough cut and laughing to a well-delivered punch line, I turn to my Dad and tell him, "They're good. They're really good."

I'm happy for my Dad. How often does the right project, right producer, right cast all fall into place for an artist to work with? Peque Gallaga has landed on an El Dorado for artists and might as well color his hair blonde in joy. But since it's most probably bad for a person of his health and age, he might as well just make a movie about it. *Wanggo Gallaga*

Peque back in the swing—and happy

From page F1

Film Festival of Flanders-Ghent in Belgium.

Landmark filmmaker

Since then, he has become a landmark Filipino filmmaker, moving on to craft such masterworks as the powerfully character-driven "Unfaithful Wife" (1986), the beguiling "Virgin Forest" (1984), and the peculiarly disturbing "Scorpio Nights" (1985).

In 1986, Peque teamed up for the first time with Lore Reyes, another exceptionally gifted film and television director, and the result was a string of critical and commercial hits, including "Once Upon a Time" (1986), "Isang Araw Walang Diyos" (1989), and "Gangland" (1998). But after finishing "Kabit ni Mrs. Montero," "Sa Piling ng Mga Aswang," and "Unfaithful Wife 2" in 1999, Peque did the unexpected and simply chose to live a quiet life in Bacolod—involving himself in community work, doing theater, giving workshops, and "teaching seminarians how to act," he adds with a chuckle.

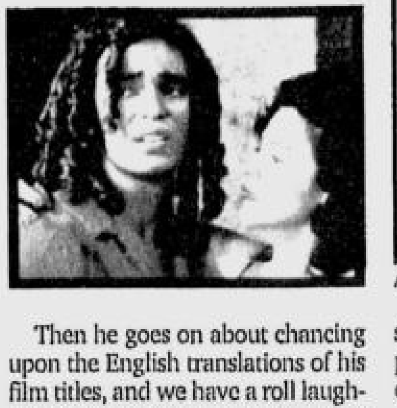
Peque on pop culture

It's been years since his last film, and it's precisely why there's mounting anticipation over his first film in over half a decade—"Pinoy Blonde," an interestingly skewed view of pop culture and its many equally interesting facets.

It's Wednesday today, and Peque sits at the editing room, along with Lore (who is also Peque's line producer for "Pinoy Blonde"), and a couple other people—including someone who seems to be the film's editor, seated in front of the editing machine, working on what appears to be scenes from the film. I peek into the computer screen and notice how beautifully shot the sequences are, how inviting the texture is, how cool Epi Quizon's blonde hair looks on screen.

STEVE TIRONA

THE MASTER SMILES. Peque outside Unitel for the Super! screening



PINOY BLONDE STARS. Dos and a blonde Epi Quizon

Peque Gallaga stops singing; he turns to look at me and at Lore, and blurts out, "Last night, I was counting my films and I just realized that this is my 33rd as a director." I am impressed. Here is a man who is on his fourth decade as a filmmaker, and after all those years, he still manages to arouse curiosity and interest.

Then he goes on about chancing upon the English translations of his film titles, and we have a roll laughing at some of the most ridiculous ones, including "In the Midst of the Aswang." I assure him that it was nothing to be embarrassed about, citing the case of Jeffrey Jeturian's "Pila Balde" which had the international title "To Fetch a Pail of Water." Everyone in the room, including Peque, roars with laughter.

Favorite virgin

I ask him if he ever has a favorite film and he replies eagerly, talking about how his mood and his disposition affect his constantly changing favorites. "At present, it's Virgin Forest," he quips with a smile.

He has obviously warmed up now, so he tells the anecdote behind his 1987 action caper, a film he co-directed with Lore. It was the year when "Karate Kid" and "No Retreat, No Surrender" were such big international hits. Mother Lily (Monteverde) wanted to ride on the wave of success of these films so she commissioned Peque and Lore to come up with something similar, or better yet, something that combined both. And so, "Kid, Don't Surrender"—translated in Tagalog as "Kid, Huwag Kang Susuko"—was born.

We all laugh again and we forget about the pictorial until Steve arrives to inform us that he had already chosen a nice spot, out on the street. On the way out, Steve tells me to keep chatting with Peque because he wants the pictures to look unplanned and relaxed. I'm usually tongue-tied around people I admire most dearly, but I am the least bit unnerved chatting with this renowned filmmaker.

This warm afternoon, Peque Gallaga is diffident and unfeigned and candid. He laughs, he poses for Steve Tirona on a busy intersection, and he sings... quite well, if you ask me.

Filmography: Peque Gallaga

1. 1973 Binhi (co-directed with Butch Perez) Premiere Productions
2. 1982 Oro, Plata, Mata Experimental Cinema of the Phils.
3. 1983 Bad Bananas sa Puting Tabing Vanguard Films
4. 1984 Shake, Rattle & Roll [Episode 3] Athena Productions
5. 1984 Virgin Forest Regal Films
6. 1985 Scorpio Nights Regal Films
7. 1986 Unfaithful Wife Regal Films
8. 1986 Once Upon A Time (co-directed with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
9. 1987 Kid, Huwag Kang Susuko (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
10. 1988 Hiwaga sa Balete Drive (with Lore Reyes) Seiko Films
11. 1988 Tiyanak (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
12. 1989 Isang Araw Walang Diyos (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
13. 1990 Trese (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
14. 1989 Abandonada (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
15. 1990 Shake, Rattle & Roll 2 (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
16. 1991 Shake, Rattle & Roll 3 (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
17. 1992 Aswang (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
18. 1992 Korona ng Birhen (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
19. 1992 Shake, Rattle & Roll 4 (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
20. 1993 Dugo ng Panday (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
21. 1994 Darna: Ang Pagbabalik (with Lore Reyes) Viva Films
22. 1995 Batang X (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
23. 1995 Baby Love (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
24. 1996 Magic Temple (with Lore Reyes) Star Cinema

25 1997 Diliryo (with Lore Reyes) MAQ Productions
26 1997 Halik ng Bampira (with Lore Reyes) OctoArts
27 1997 Magic Kingdom (with Lore Reyes) Neo Films
28 1998 Gangland (with Lore Reyes) Neo Films
29 1998 Puso ng Pasko (with Lore Reyes) Star Cinema
30 1999 Kabit ni Mrs. Montero (with Lore Reyes) Viva Films
31 1999 Unfaithful Wife 2 (with Lore Reyes) Viva Films
32 1999 Sa Piling ng Mga Aswang (with Lore Reyes) Regal Films
33 June 2005 Pinoy Blonde Unitel Productions

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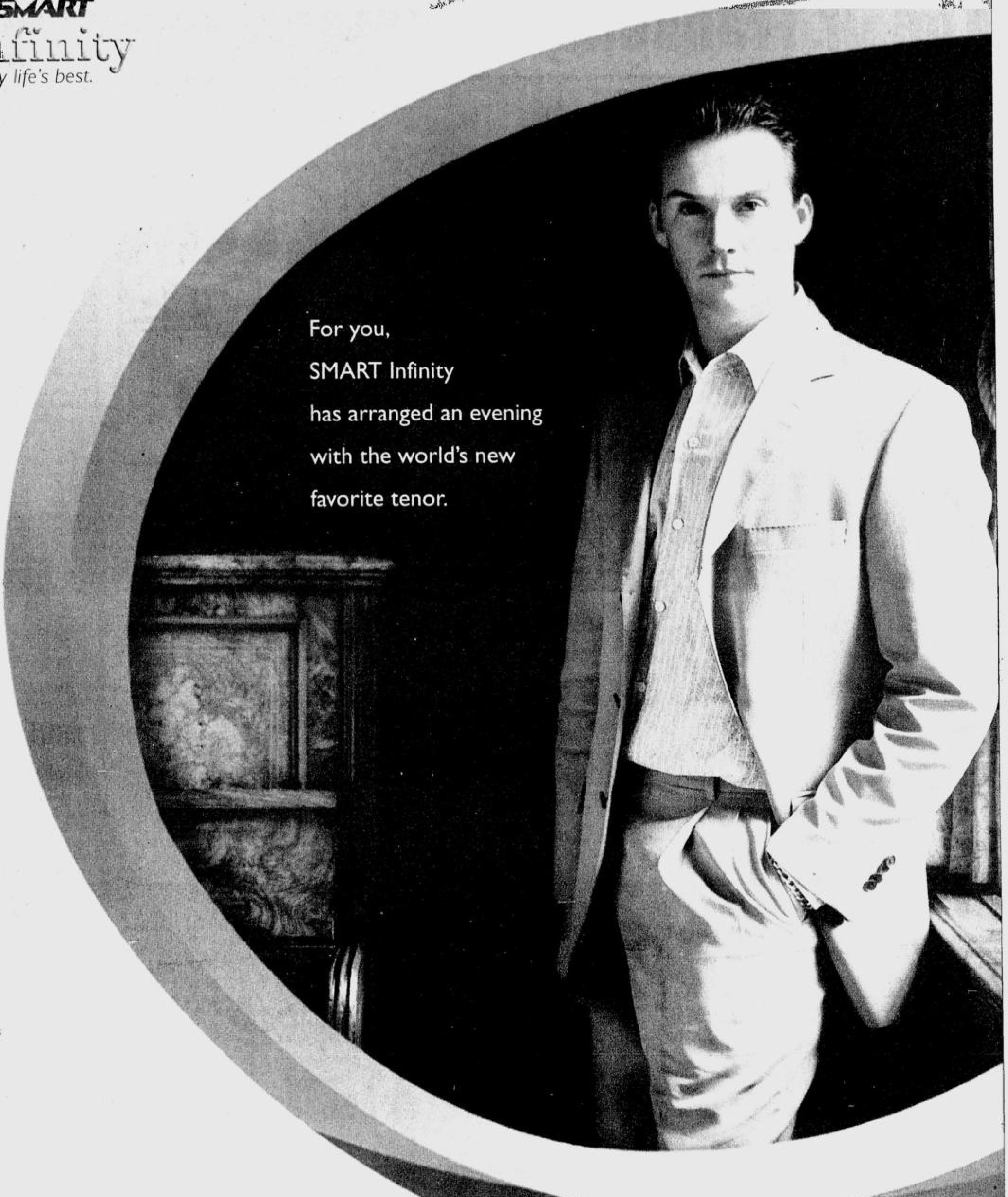

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Someone Like You	RW5
Nella Fantasia	RW6
La Donna é Mobile	RW7
Nessun Dorma	RW8

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Text and photos by David Milan

Jan Uichico

Age: 23
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: Reaching the summit of the mountain or scoring a goal
The most hyperactive person I know is: My whole family!!!
When I'm hyper, I: Eat. haha! Or cook to relax me.
E-mail me at: jan@scubafan.com

Myrrh Cortes

Age: 18
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: FASHION days!
The most hyperactive person I know is: Dom Hernandez
When I'm hyper, I: Turn to a crazy, no poise weirdo
E-mail me at: aji_pichi@yahoo.com

Charles Navalta

Age: 20
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: When I see my celebrity crushes wearing their best looking outfits
The most hyperactive person I know is: Dom Hernandez
When I'm hyper, I: Clean my aquarium
E-mail me at: charlesnav@hotmail.com

Chari Altarejos

Age: 19
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: My "spongebob," chocolates and school work
The most hyperactive person I know is: My "honey rose"
When I'm hyper, I: Eat and smile a lot
E-mail me at: sassy0821@hotmail.com

MJ Bayang

Age: 21
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: My girlfriend...
The most hyperactive person I know is: My cute niece
When I'm hyper, I: Play basketball or go to the gym
E-mail me at: mjbayang@gmail.com

Jackie Garcia

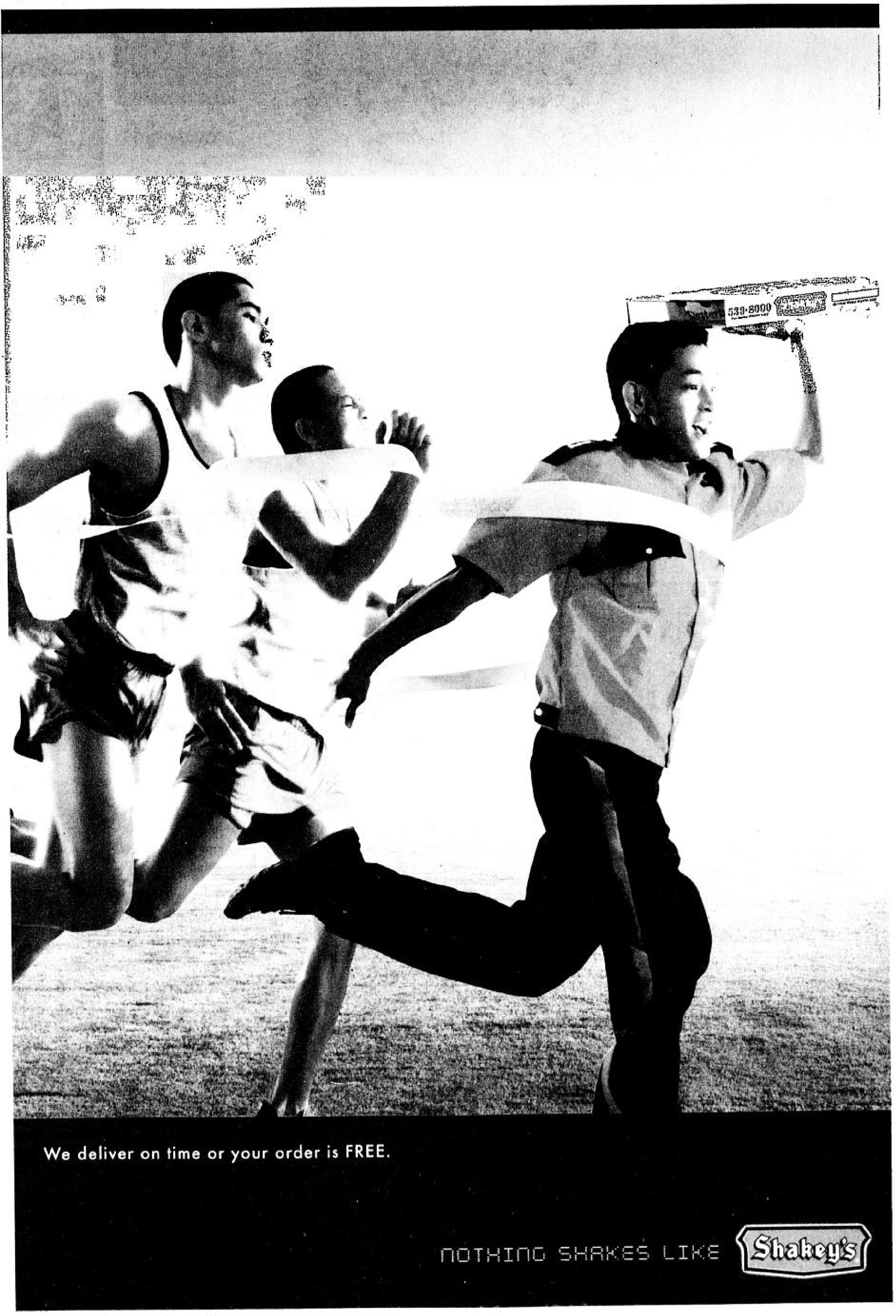
Age: 18
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: Cramming a school paper
The most hyperactive person I know is: My 5-year-old brother
When I'm hyper, I: Get things done
E-mail me at: jackieline_garcia@yahoo.com

Dino Pastrano

Age: 19
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: "TARANAX"
The most hyperactive person I know is: My friend, Steph Castillo
When I'm hyper, I: Jump around like there's no tomorrow!
E-mail me at: dinopastrano_27@yahoo.com

Ann Hofileña

Age: 19
What/who gives you an adrenaline rush: Doing something for the first time and not knowing what's going to happen... and seeing someone I like!
The most hyperactive person I know is: Kiran
When I'm hyper, I: Do the craziest things like singing and dancing
E-mail me at: k_hofileña@yahoo.com



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Digital Pleasures by Automatic Centre, the largest and only Plasma and LCD TV exhibit in the country, caused quite a stir as we entered the New Year 2005. The launching of the most-talked about "Digital" exhibit highlighting the sleekest flat panel displays was well complemented by the presence of Filipina beauty queens that sashayed along the catwalks of the brand new Gateway Mall at the Araneta Center.

Enchanting plasma TVs, LCD TVs, projection TVs, and digital gadgets featured at the Digital Pleasures exhibit simply became irresistible as Binibining Pilipinas titleholders, Karen Agustin - Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2002; Margaret Ann Bayot - Bb. Pilipinas International 2004; Maricar Balagtas - Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2004; and Jhezarie Javier - Bb. Pilipinas International 2003, sampled and tested the products on display. Digital products from Apple, Audiovox, Canon, Hitachi, JVC, Kolin-Syntax, LG, Nextbase, Philips, Panasonic, Pioneer, Samsung, Sharp, Sony and Toshiba took center stage at the activity center of the Gateway Mall and will continue to be on display until Sunday, Feb. 6.

Digital Pleasures at the Gateway Mall offers residents in the area a glimpse and feel of the future of digital technology. More importantly, Automatic Centre offers consumers the opportunity to experience and bring home the

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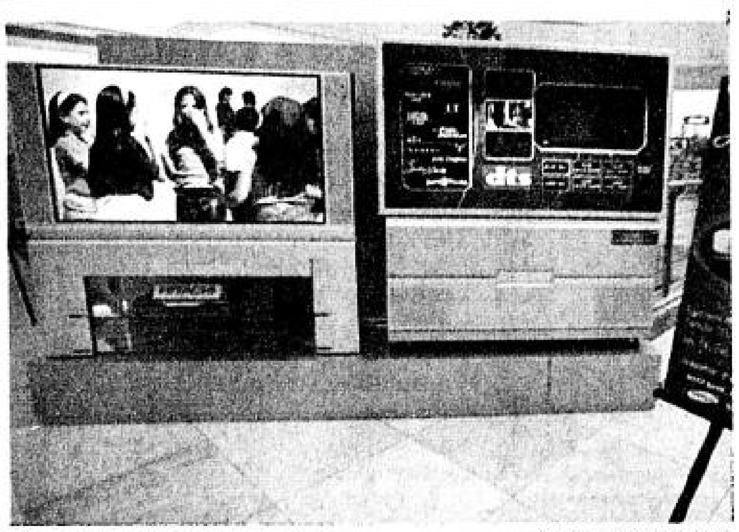

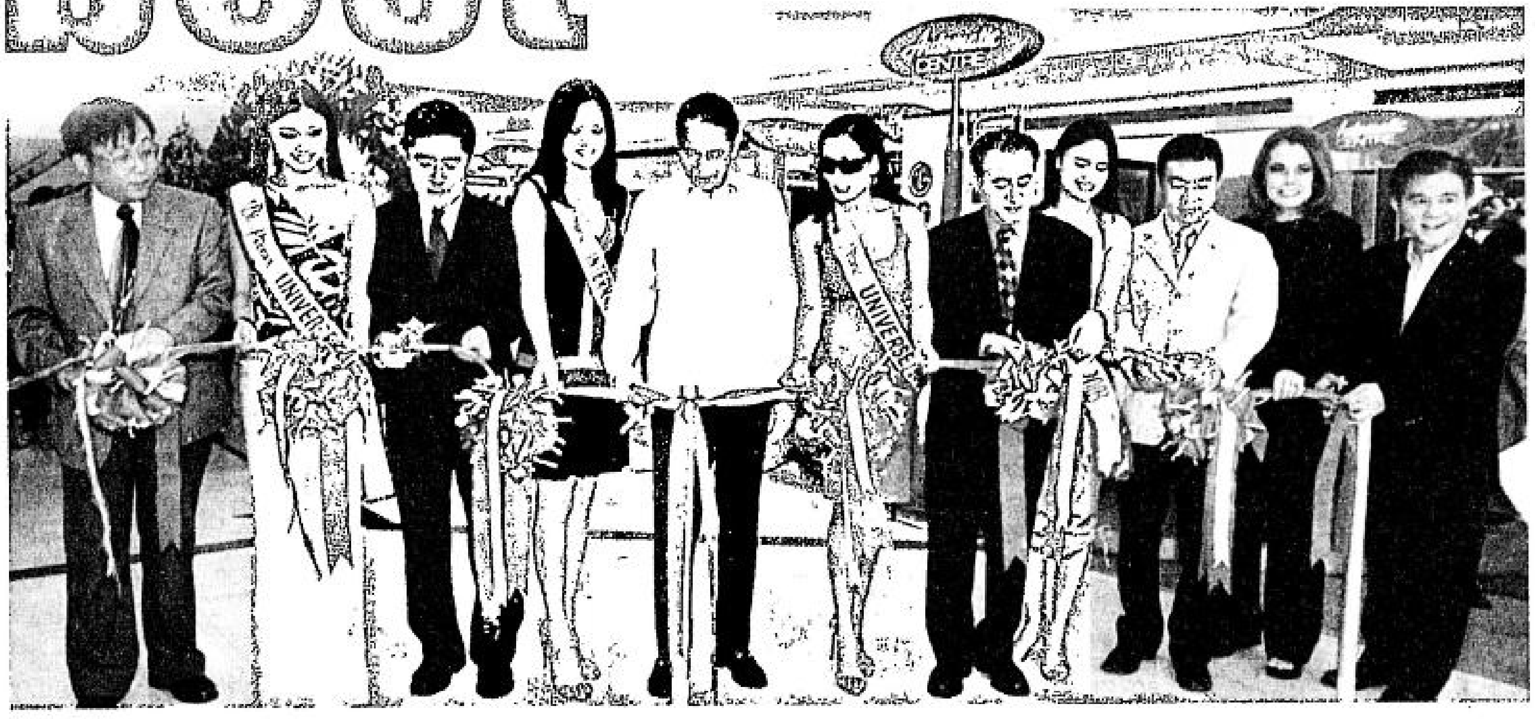

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

TOM Cheng - President, Kolin Philippines; Karen Agustin - Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2002; Hideyuki Takato - Incoming President, JVC Philippines; Margaret Ann Bayot - Bb. Pilipinas International 2004; Jorge Araneta - Chair and CEO, Araneta Group of Companies; Maricar Balagtas - Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2004; Koji Uehigashi - Director for Sales and Marketing, Panasonic Philippines; Jhezarie Javier - Bb. Pilipinas International 2003; Sang Il Nam - VP for Marketing (white lines), LG Electronics; Stella Marquez-Araneta - Chairperson, Bb. Pilipinas Charities Inc; Samie Lim - President, Automatic Centre

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JVC
Experience

Automatic CENTRE

DIGITAL PLEASURES

Gateway Mall • January 14 to February 6, 2005

The Digital Pleasures exhibit also serves as the preview to the upcoming concept store from Automatic Centre to be located at the 4th level of the Gateway Mall

I'M here!
METROBANK
ANZ

Metrobank and PSBank cardholders get a 3% discount on all regular items!

Automatic CENTRE

digital lifestyle of their dreams through highly affordable terms such as zero percent installment deals on all major credit cards.

The Digital Pleasures exhibit also serves at the preview to the upcoming concept store from Automatic Centre to be located at the 4th level of the Gateway Mall. Samie Lim, president of Automatic Centre, shares that the soon to open store will be a "digital plaza" showcasing products with digital technology in unique showrooms depicting home entertainment systems of the future. The store will also be the first to have a professional audio room with a complete line of sound systems from Yamaha.

Automatic Centre, established in 1948 and recognized as the pioneer in the appliance industry, has been serving customers in the Araneta Center for over 20 years. Having been long time partners, Automatic Centre did not hesitate to indicate its support of the redevelopment plans for Araneta Center and quickly signed up for the Gateway Mall.

Teofilo Asuncion Jr, president of Araneta Center, acknowledged Automatic Centre's efforts to bring new things to the Araneta Center: "The Digital Pleasures exhibit is in line with our thinking of offering something very unique for our shoppers". Asuncion further believes that the new mall would draw a new set of customers as retailers like Automatic Centre continue to unveil fresh and innovative ideas at their Gateway Mall storefronts.

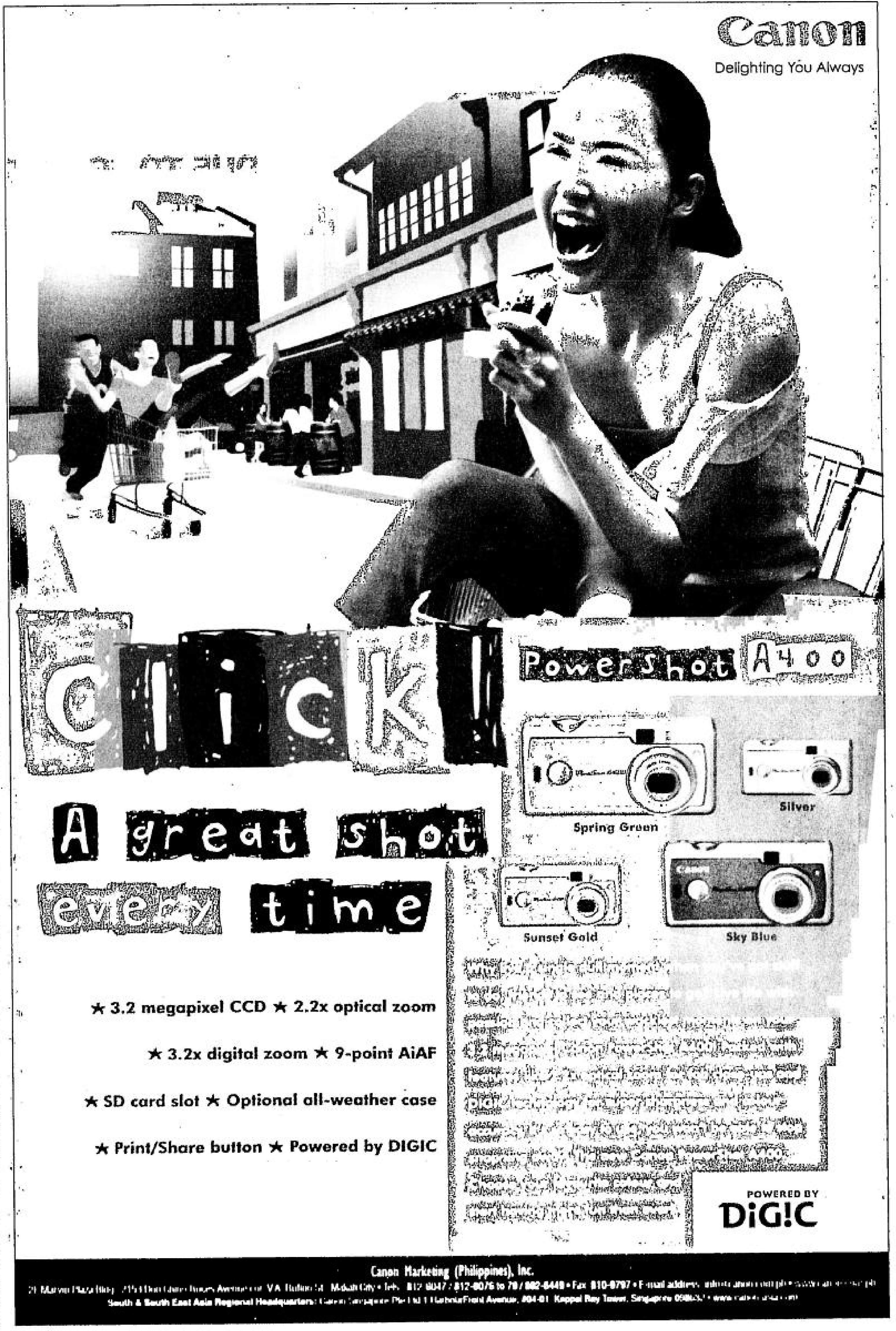
Digital Pleasures brings the ultimate experience in home entertainment with a showcase of the hottest in consumer electronics for 2005. Come and see the latest models with award-winning innovations in flat panel televisions, including the world's largest plasma TV on display and projection TV that uses Texas Instrument's DLP technology.

Also featured in the exhibit are the ultra hip and stylish gadgets such as the iPod MP3 players, digital cameras, digital video cameras as well as portable DVD players.

Booths have been specially designed to highlight the featured products while the layout allows maximum appreciation of products and the easy flow of people.

Having received significant praise for rolling out the red carpet for consumers at the Glorietta and in Alabang Town Center with Plasma Pleasures - The Ultimate Entertainment Exhibit last December 2004, Automatic Centre promises that Digital Pleasures at the Gateway Mall will prove to be truly an all-around experience.

Expect great products, fabulous deals, affordable terms, and unbelievable discounts from your one and only appliance authority, Automatic Centre.



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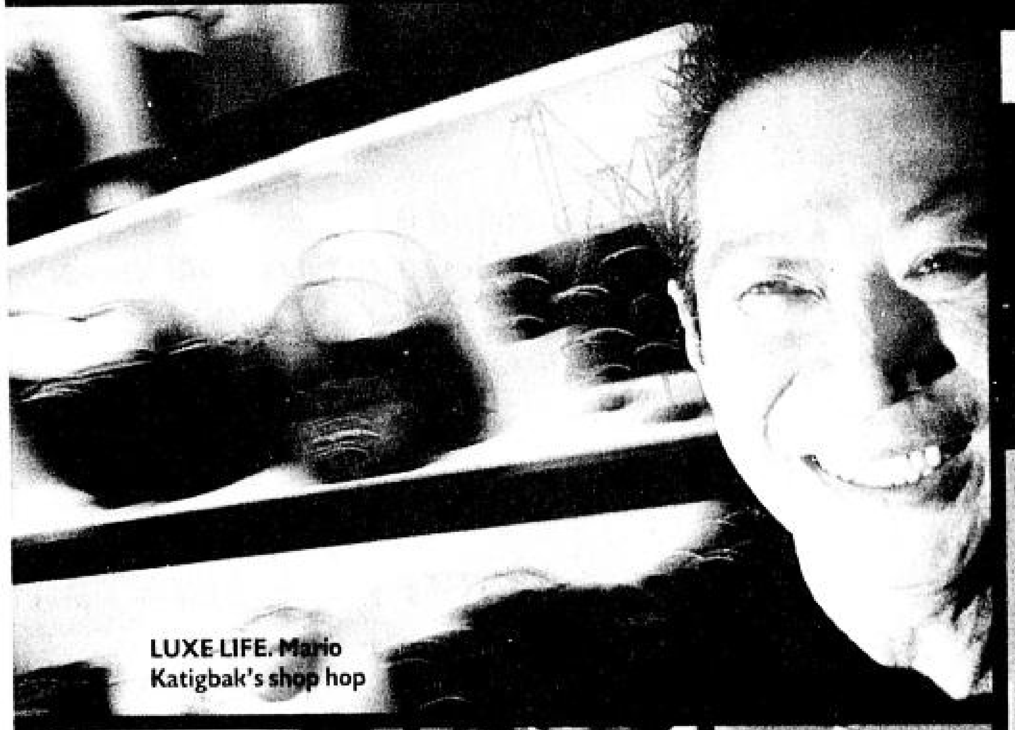
BORGY'S revenge

RAUL Manzano's society

CAPITAL G. Georgina Wilson at Gucci

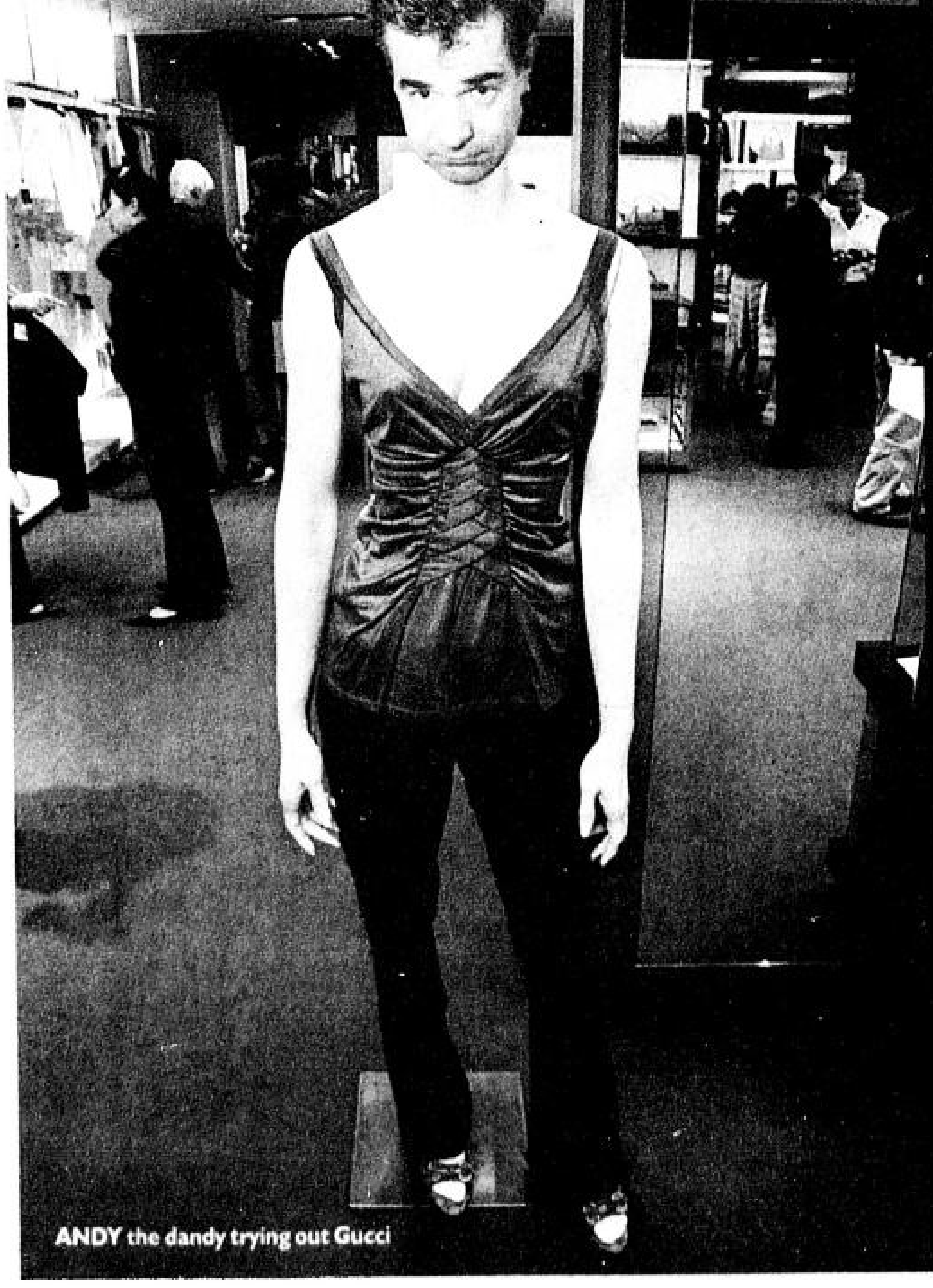
ARTSY SET. Leo Valdes and Baby Arenas

AMAZING GRACE. Grace Tagle dons the Gucci Cruise Collection


LUXE LIFE. Mario Katigbak's shop hop

A PLUS. Anton Huang

WANDA WOMEN. Wanda and Joyce love Gucci


ANDY the dandy trying out Gucci

caught by

andy MALUCHE

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Cruisin', not for bruisin'

By Tim Yap

ALL ABOARD the luxury liner that is spelled with a capital G—Gucci at Greenbelt 4 showed off its Cruise collection via a nocturnal showdown of bubbly and booty.

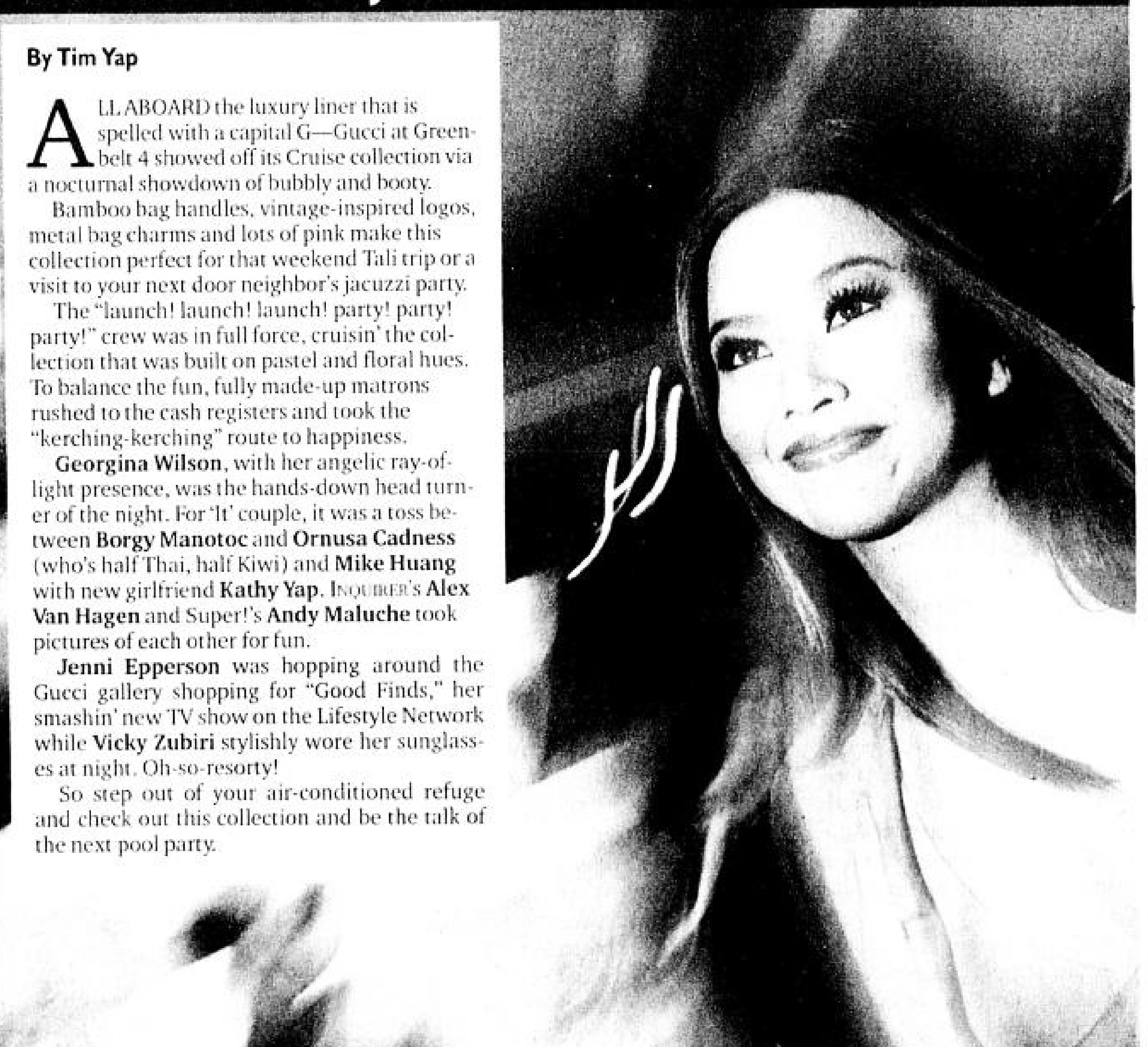
Bamboo bag handles, vintage-inspired logos, metal bag charms and lots of pink make this collection perfect for that weekend Tali trip or a visit to your next door neighbor's jacuzzi party.

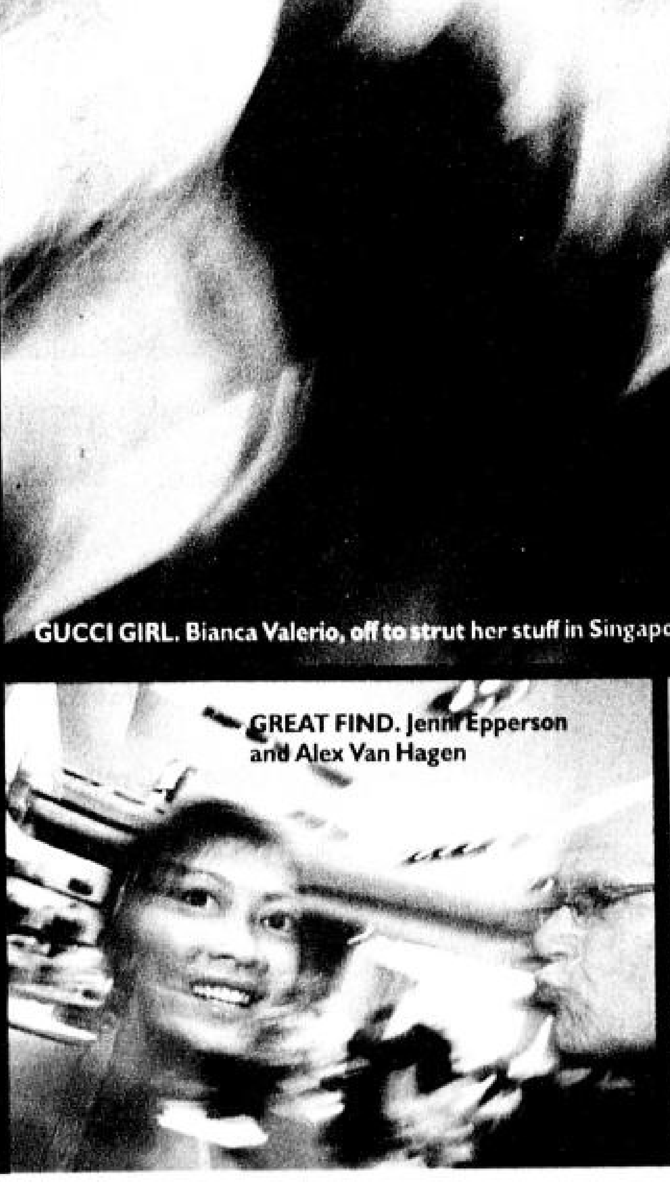
The "launch! launch! launch! party! party! party!" crew was in full force, cruisin' the collection that was built on pastel and floral hues. To balance the fun, fully made-up matrons rushed to the cash registers and took the "kerching-kerching" route to happiness.

Georgina Wilson, with her angelic ray-of-light presence, was the hands-down head turner of the night. For 'It' couple, it was a toss between **Borgy Manotoc** and **Ornusa Cadness** (who's half Thai, half Kiwi) and **Mike Huang** with new girlfriend **Kathy Yap**. INQUIRER's **Alex Van Hagen** and Super!'s **Andy Maluche** took pictures of each other for fun.

Jenni Epperson was hopping around the Gucci gallery shopping for "Good Finds," her smashin' new TV show on the Lifestyle Network while **Vicky Zubiri** stylishly wore her sunglasses at night. Oh-so-resorty!

So step out of your air-conditioned refuge and check out this collection and be the talk of the next pool party.


GUCCI GIRL. Bianca Valerio, off to strut her stuff in Singapore


GREAT FIND. Jenni Epperson and Alex Van Hagen

ORNUSA, THAT GIRL. Call me "Flex!"

Alagaan-natin ang mundo!

Junior Inquirer Special

Text us your feedback: inquirer ji name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 2005 ✦ 8 PAGES ✦ VOLUME 2, NUMBER 8

E-mail: pr_junior_inquirer@inquirer.com.ph

What's Inside:

- Earth-saving tips Page 2
- Bean from Eggs Page 3
- Short Story: The Cockroach and the Coelacanth Page 4
- Meet the Earth Patrol! Page 6

Earth Exposed!

A few decades ago rainy season was in September and October, then it moved up to July and August. Just last year, rainy season started in May! Freaky weather is just one thing. What about the landslides, earthquakes and tsunami? What is going on with planet earth? JUNIOR INQUIRER takes a look at the environment with reports from Enviro Detective, Data Tolentino.

TSUNAMI aftermath

AFP

Case of the Roaring Waves
File no. 122604
To: Enviro Detectives
From: HQ

RIGHT after Christmas, large rolling waves the size and speed of airplanes smashed onto the beaches of eight different countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Kenya, and even Ethiopia!

The waves knocked down trees and buildings, tossed cars, and swept people away.

Your Assignment: Find out what caused this great wave-roaring and tell us how to protect ourselves.

Findings: These series of waves are called tsunamis. They are caused by very strong earthquakes under the sea. Tectonic plates move against one another, displacing water which results into tsunami.

Cracking the Code: There is no need to panic as long as we know Tsunami Safety Rules (from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Service http://wcatwc.gov/safety.htm):

- If you feel a quake and are near the beach, keep calm and quickly move to higher ground.
- Approaching tsunamis are usually accompanied by a loud roar that sounds like a train or aircraft. If a tsunami arrives at night when you cannot see the ocean, this is also nature's tsunami warning and should be heeded.

The Case of the Rumbling Mountainside
File no 111104
To: Enviro Detectives
From: HQ

A QUIET mountainside town is going about its day when suddenly, large amounts of soil and rock start rolling off the sides of mountains and onto the roads and villages. When the rumbling stops, many people are hurt. Others have lost their homes.

Your Assignment: Did the mountains shrug its shoulders? Uncover the mystery of this strange behavior!

The Findings: It's pretty clear that what happened was a landslide. Soil becomes loose due to natural causes (heavy rain, earthquake, volcanic eruption) or human activity (deforestation, mining, dynamite use). The soil then falls off the hills or mountains due to gravity. (Geoscience Australia: www.ga.gov.au/urban/factsheets/landslide_potential.jsp)

Cracking the code: Landslides are really tricky. But the good thing is that there are some things we can do to prevent them:

- Read up on the bad effects of deforestation and soil erosion.
- Talk to people about how we should protect the forests in the mountains.
- Report any illegal activity happening in the forests.
- Be involved in community activities that monitor the environment around us.

The Case of the Howling winds
File no: 100804
To: Enviro Detectives
From: HQ

SEVERAL days of unusually strong winds and rain, dark skies and chilly weather kept people indoors. Rivers overflowed, some places were flooded. Others had no electricity.

Your Assignment: Explain why the weather has been so weird lately. The winds are so loud, I'm afraid I'll wake up to find my ceiling gone!

The Findings: It's another typhoon! Not surprising since we get hit with more than a hundred every year.

Typhoons are formed when warm ocean water meets cool air—evaporation happens. The winds take up the water vapor. As it rises, it condenses or turns back into water, releasing heat. The cycle causes winds to swirl and grow, becoming a storm. (Science News for Kids http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org/articles/20040929/Feature1.asp)

Some typhoons become super typhoons because they get stronger as they travel from ocean to land.

Cracking the Code: The most we can do is wait it out. Keep flashlights and candles handy, as well as a transistor radio for weather updates. Stay out of the rains and don't go wading into flood waters—you never know what you might catch there!

Stuff you can do:

- Always keep your canals free from trash, especially if you live in flood-prone areas.
- If the storm hits, unplug all unnecessary appliances.

PDI PHOTO

LANDSLIDE

TYPHOON

PHOTO BY ROMY HOMILLADA
CONCEPT BY GRACE LEUNG
ART DIRECTION BY ERNIE SAMBO

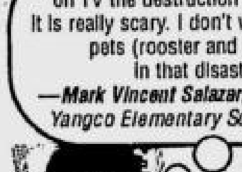
What natural disaster do you fear most?

Compiled by Agay Llanera, Marlet Salazar, and Eline Santos

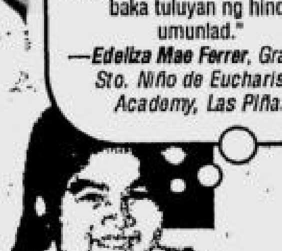
"Earthquakes! I don't want to be trapped under blocks of cement!" —***Christian Cruz***, *Grade 5, Montessori de San Juan, San Juan*

"Tsunami, because it takes away all that people love." —***Jenny Grace Acurin***, *Grade 2, Mikesell Elementary School, Las Piñas*

"Tsunami. I have seen on TV the destruction it brings and it is really scary. I don't want to lose my pets (rooster and pigeons) in that disaster." —***Mark Vincent Salazar***, *Grade 3, T.R. Yangco Elementary School, Manila*



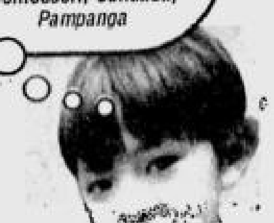
"Floods and landslides like what happened in Infanta, Quezon. If that happened to us, baka tuluyan ng hindi umunlad." —***Edeliza Mae Ferrer***, *Grade 6, Sto. Niño de Eucharistia Academy, Las Piñas*



"Does the death of the sun count? Well, even if it's going to happen way after I die (billions of years from now) it's something we really can't prevent (since all stars die anyway) and when it does, it'll wipe out all mankind!." —***Andionne Parlade***, *1st year high school, Miriam College, Quezon City*

"Tsunami because we're near Manila Bay so it can reach us." —***Mark Ezekiel Cristobal***, *Grade 5, Creative Middle School, Las Piñas*

"I fear typhoons and landslides because I don't want to be separated from my family and lose our home." —***Lean Paolo Mananghaya***, *Grade 2, God's Grace Montessori, Candaba, Pampanga*



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2003 Best Children's Newspaper Awardee

Choosing what to plant

WE'RE actually all farmers planting and planting away.

Some people plant seeds of fear.

The robber who takes a cell phone at knife-point sows seeds of fear in his victim. They can't walk on the same path without fearfully wondering if it will happen again.

Some people plant seeds of hope.

They're the ones who tell you: you can do anything! You're great!

Some people believe in a cause so passionately, you can't help but get cross-pollinated by their ideas.

You might meet a group of kids in Batangas who compost food waste in their backyard, collect bottles and newspapers to sell later, and plant black pepper with other ornamentals to beautify their surroundings.

You might meet kids in San Pablo who spend weekends cleaning up the area around their lakes.

You might meet a kid in Biñan who turns potato chip cans into Christmas decorations.

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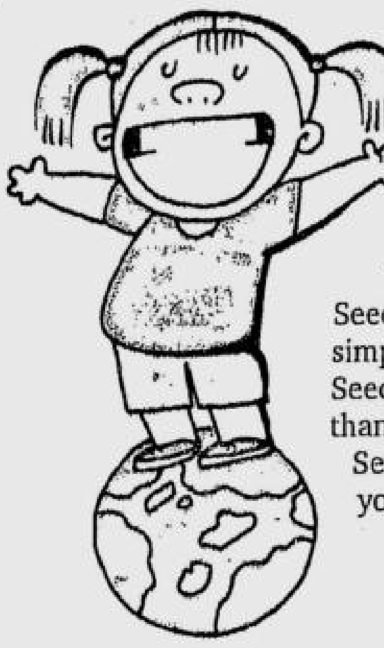

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JOURNAL
PAGES

Shells and a Sunset

By Ana Margarita Veloso
Miriam College Grade School

SEVERAL years ago, my family and I went on vacation in Nasugbu. Each morning, I'd wake up early and right after breakfast, my family and I would go to the seashore. My mommy would lie down on her *banig*, a book in hand, while my dad would be sunbathing.

Sometimes, my sister and I would build sandcastles for my parents but most of the time, I tagged along with Mama, my affectionate name for grandma. Often, the two of us would watch the waves and hunt for shells.

"Pick those with character," Grandma would tell me, and I would then search for unusual shells in the sand. Some of them were big and some were small but all of them were outstanding on their own. Before the day ended, the small red pail I carried would be filled with well-chosen shells.

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I wanted to ask what was it they were waiting for but no one was talking, so I kept quiet instead. Then, all of a sudden, Mama said, "Look, Mita," and she pointed to the sky.

The bright yellow sun that greeted me that morning was now a deep, dark orange ball of fire. Slowly, it began to sink. Each time I blinked, a part of the sun had drowned in the multi-hued waters of the sea. Then, with a plop, the sun returned to the sea for a night's rest.

Shells/ p. 7

Going through Puberty

By Christina Lauder Advincula
Miriam College Grade School
Quezon City

PUBERTY, as they say, is part of everyone's life. It occurs in both boys and girls. It's what happens when your hormones begin to go crazy. For girls, it means you will start having your period. You will see irritating things on your face; for instance, pimples (the most popular of all), whiteheads and blackheads.

I think it is a very difficult stage in life. You realize that things were much better before. You'll miss playing tag, swimming and trekking. I know that those games may seem a bit childish, but I have to admit that I really miss those days. You also become conscious of the way you look... which, for me, is a good thing.

Seriously, without going through puberty, I'll be an abnormal child. I'll miss part of my physical growth. But sometimes one just feels ashamed especially when you spot an enormous stain on your skirt. If you're in a mall, how would you solve that problem?

That happened to me a long time ago, though not in a mall. We were swimming at a friend' s house because it was my classmate's birthday. I knew that I had my period, but since my doctor

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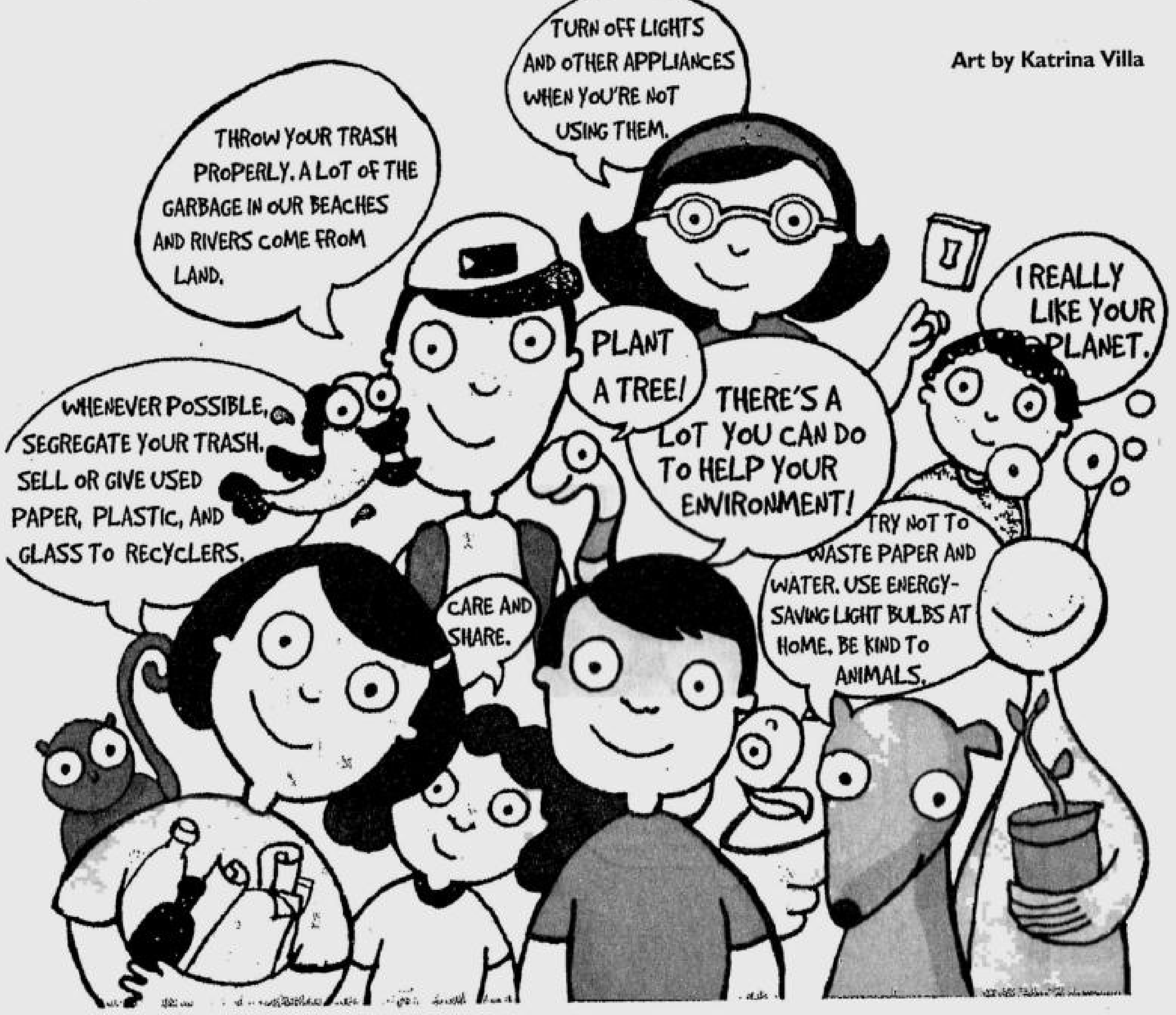
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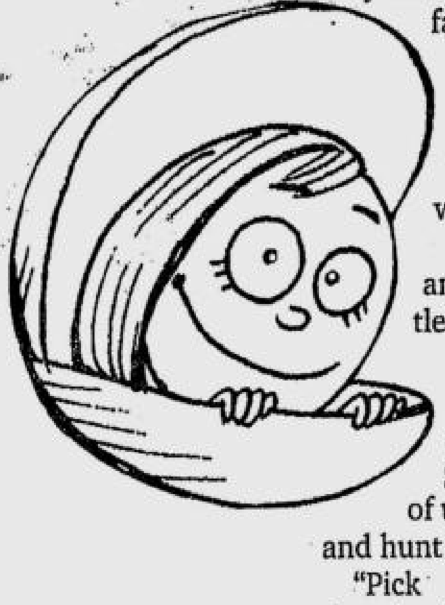

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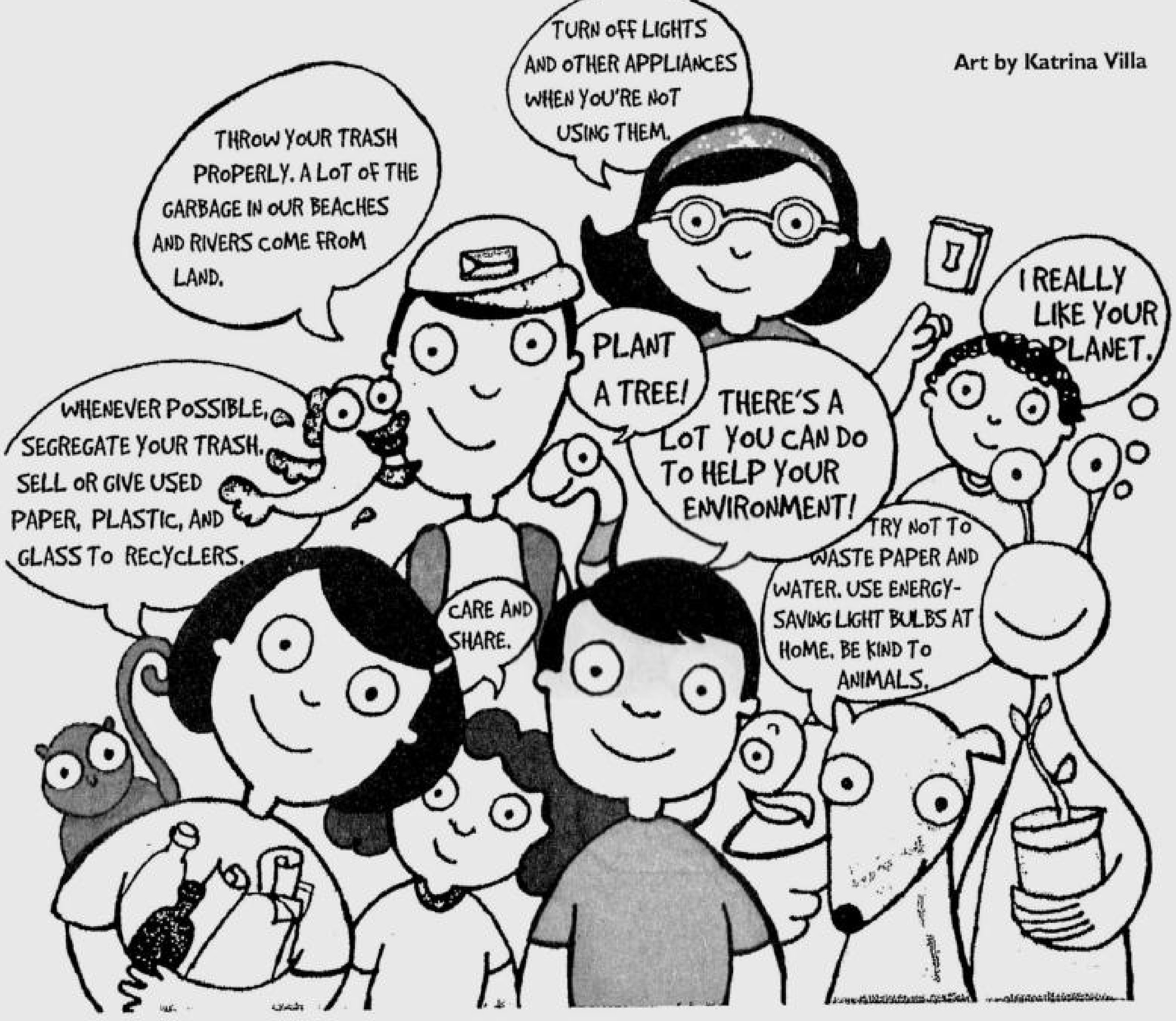
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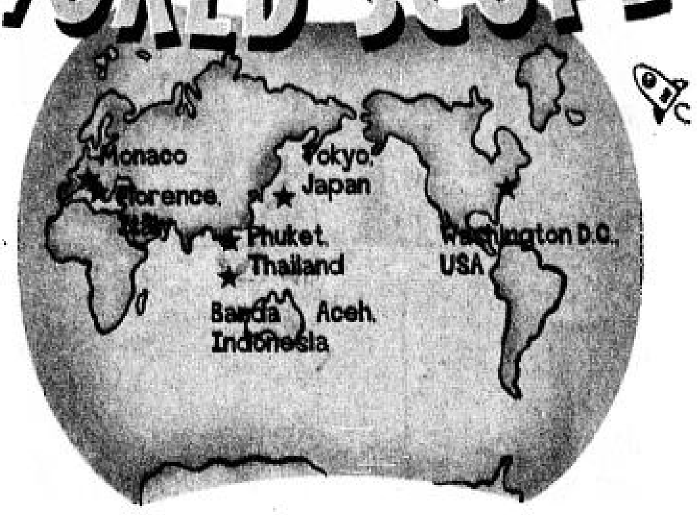
WORLD SCOPE

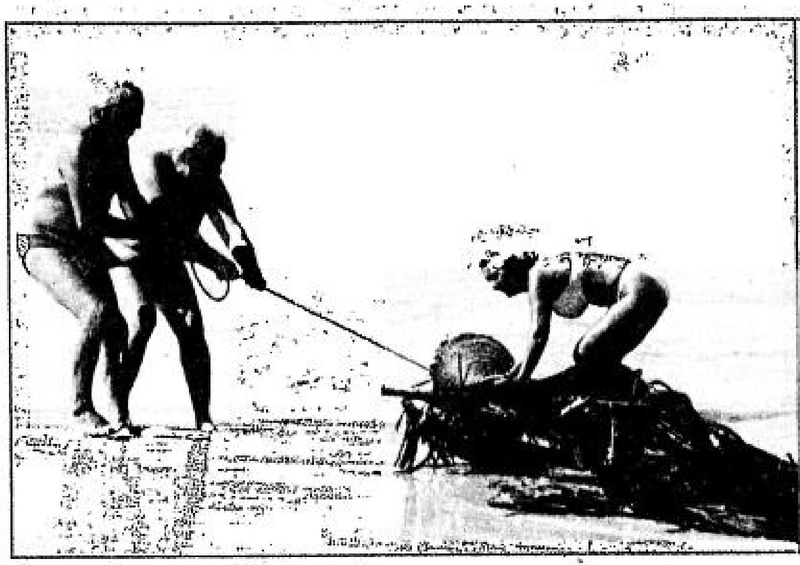


Bean thinking of you

SEND your love through a bean plant that sprouts to read a special message. Japan toy maker Tomy unveiled these bean plants with messages in French such as "bonne chance" (good luck), sprouted from a calcium-made faked egg at the company's showroom in Tokyo. *AFP*

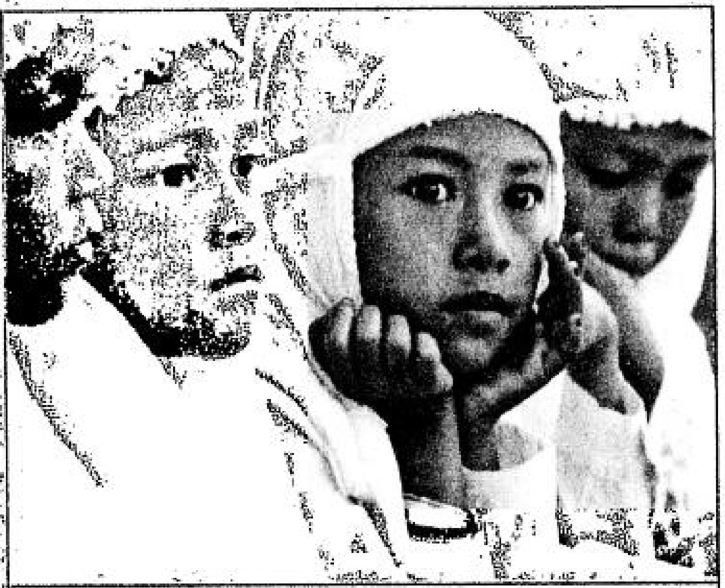
Panda munchies

DINING on their bamboo lunch al fresco, giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian enjoy the year's first snowfall at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington. Giant pandas are endangered in the wild, with an estimated 1,600 left in the wild. *Reuters*



Green tourists

TOURISTS clear rubbish on Patong beach in Phuket, Thailand following the aftermath of last month's tsunami. About 5,000 people in Thailand died due to the catastrophe while 3,000 are missing. *AFP*

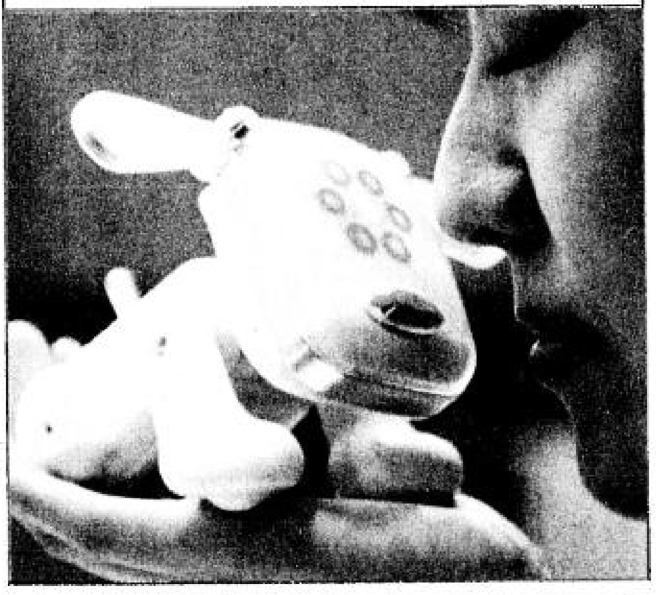


Back to school

INDONESIAN elementary school students wait outside a classroom in Banda Aceh. Students returned to schools on Wednesday, one month after a tsunami hit the country. *Reuters*

I-Dog for I-Robot?

SEGA Toys' I-Dog can play music with a touch to its nose, a button atop its head, or its tail. It can also dance to the beat with a combination of touches by the user. *Reuters*



Circus training

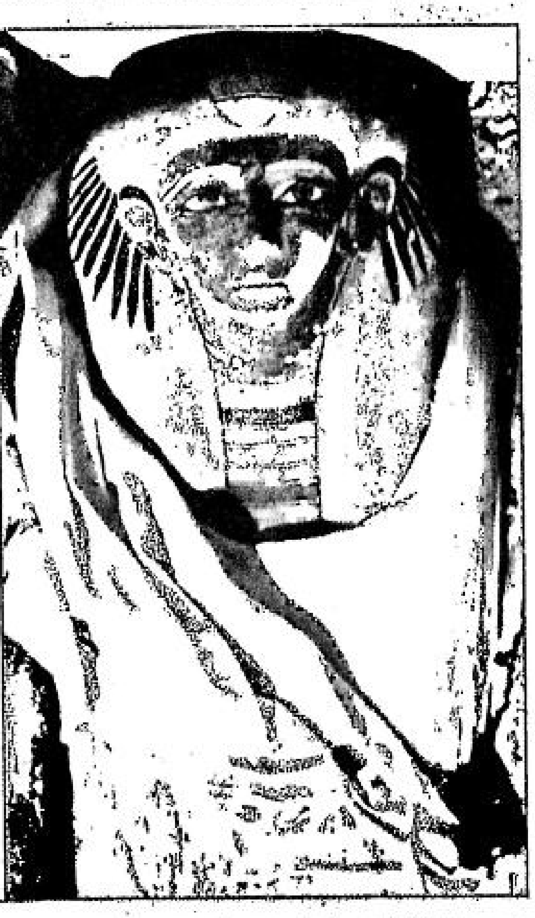
YOUNG circus school students from the Marx Troupe of Russia perform during the 29th Monte-Carlo International Circus Festival in Monaco. *AP*

Doing the catwalk

KIDS modeled a lot of funky clothes at the Pitti Immagine Bimbo fashion show in Florence where 342 companies gave a preview of their clothing and accessories collections for children and teens, among others. These girls are wearing creations of Agatha Ruiz de la Prada. *AFP*

Old mummy, newly found

PHOTO shows a mummy found by a research team from Japan's Waseda University in an unrobbed tomb believed to date back to more than 3,500 years ago in the archeological site of Dahashur North in Egypt. The discovered body, wearing a mask painted blue and red that still retain vivid shades, has a high academic value as it is "a perfect mummy that has escaped robbery and other damage," said Sakuji Yoshimura, head of the team. *AFP*



Flights so icy

TATIANA Totmianina and Maxim Marinin of Russia perform in the Short Program competition at the European Figure Skating Championships in Turin. *AFP*

The Coelacanth and the Cockroach

By Stefan Osmeña
Illustrations by Jason Moss

FASTER. He had to run faster. He had to scurry as fast as his six little legs could carry him. The ominous cloud of noxious green matter was rapidly drifting towards him.

"Oh, I'll never make it!" Blatt wailed. He was drained of all energy and hope.

"Well, this is the end," panted the insect, "I've lived a good two days. My time has finally come."

Growing up as a scavenger on Tinina, Balut Islands located on the southernmost tip of Mindanao, life was slow and simple. But then, the townsfolk hired a fancy pest control company from Manila to rid the area of vermin and insects.

Escaping from the terrible fog, Blatt hopped onto an acacia bark just as a gust of wind blew him into the ocean.

"Whew, that was a close one. I guess I'll live for another 38 days."

The winds and strong ocean currents took the floating insect aboard his bark across the Pacific Ocean, past the Greater Sunda Islands and into the Molucca Sea. Within days, he headed straight to Sulawesi in Indonesia.

"Where am I? All I can see is water, water everywhere. I think I've already used up a day of my 40-day life span just floating here," he claimed.

"I am so hungry! I guess I have no choice but to eat my own raft."

As he slowly started to gnaw on the salty bark, he noticed a volley of bubbles rippling on the surface of the water.

"Oh my!" the arthropod bellowed, "I hope it's not something that would try to devour or squash me!"

Out of the depths arose a blue, fossil-like fish that looked as if it was carved out of stone. It was about five feet long and weighed a hundred pounds.

Small white splotches that resembled sponges covered the creature's skin. It was covered with sharp, serrated scales, and its mouth was lined with several rows of teeth. Fins on fleshy stalks portruded from its body. Its tail fin was divided into three flaps, the middle one also with a bulging stalk. The fish looked very ugly at first glance, but when examined carefully, was as beautiful as a rainbow. It cocked its head towards the six-legged insect and spoke in a deep voice, "Hello there, I am Gombess, the coelacanth. May I ask who you are?"

"My name is Blatt, sir," stuttered the startled creature.

"Pray tell, what are you doing this side of the ocean?" queried Gombess, "It's been a long time since anybody spoke to me. Judging by your appearance, you seem to be a common cockroach. You meet all of the requirements: an oval, flattened head; a lack of an eardrum; wings and antennae; and you are a hideous shade of brown."

"Yes, that I am, a cockroach from the Philippines. I was escaping from poisonous fumes meant to decimate all roaches from my country. I fear I am the last male cockroach alive," Blatt shared as he rubbed his antennae together. "By the way, could you please tell me what a coelacanth is?"

"Very well," replied Gombess, "Coelacanths are fish that appeared around 350 million years ago."

"Wow, that's amazing! We cockroaches have been around for only 300 million years," Blatt remarked.

"That's a new fact for me. Anyway, allow me to continue. Our name means 'hollow spine' in Greek, because we really do have hollow spines."

"You are quite lucky to catch me on the surface of the ocean because we rarely swim at depths of less
meters, and many of us live
600 meters below the water's

"People thought we were
in 1938, a fisherman found
relatives in his net. The worl
prised that many of my kind
in the Comoros, near Madag
people there called us 'gombes
meant 'worthless fish'. I gue
not a tasty species. However,
kind can be found right here,
si, Indonesia."

"I was just wondering, wh
eat?" asked Blatt.

"Lots of things," Gombes
"and did you know that I'm
vore?"

The small white splotches o
skin glistened in the sun as it
trembling cockroach.

"You…you are?" gulped
with fear.

The coelacanth eyed the bu
terest. "Why… yes I am,"
replied. "We carnivores feed
fish and cephalopods, the mi
of course. As formidable pre
use specialized sensory organ
our prey."

The coelacanth continued
scription of his eyes that wer
to the dark ocean depths and
sensitive cells running down
of his body to detect moveme

"Indentations on either si
snout lead to a jelly-filled ca
skull," Gombess rambled. "Th
system helps us detect weak e
nals emitted by other living
letting us zero in on potential

"By the way," continued th
coelacanth, "I recall that I ha
en anything but tasteless
cephalopods my entire life. I

LEAGUE OF PLANETARY PROTECTOR

SOS! Planet Earth is in dire need of help! Good thing these real-life superheroes are coming to the rescue.

By Margaux Ortiz, Eline Santos and Christine Paita

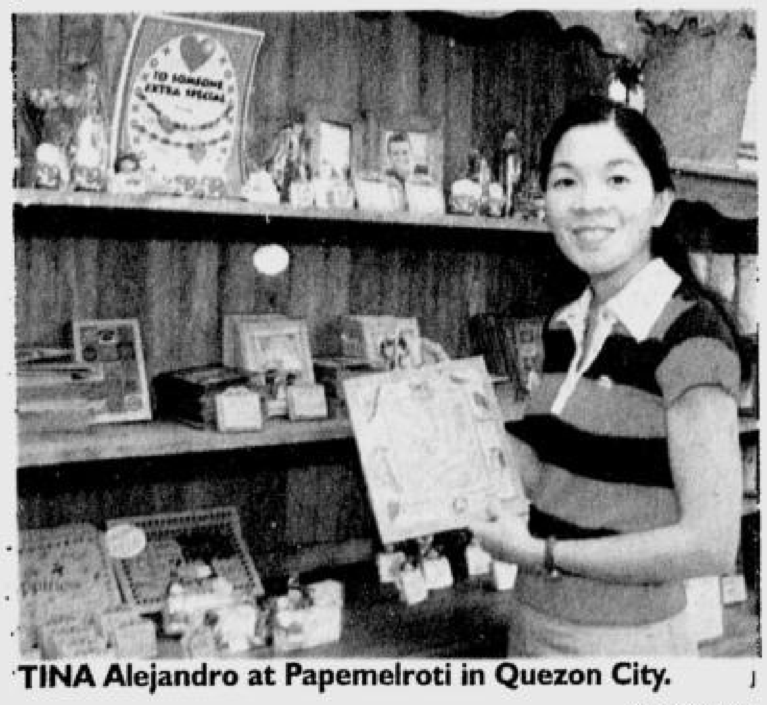
The Recyclinator

Headquarters: Papemelroti

Secret Identity: Tina Alejandro, product designer and one of the company directors of Papemelroti

Superpowers:

- Able to turn recycled pine wood into furniture.
- Uses 100 percent recycled and unbleached paper for paper products.
- Supports active campaigns to preserve the planet.
- Sends earth-friendly tips to planet lovers through e-mail.



TINA Alejandro at Papemelroti in Quezon City.

JOHNNY VILLENA

The Forest Queen

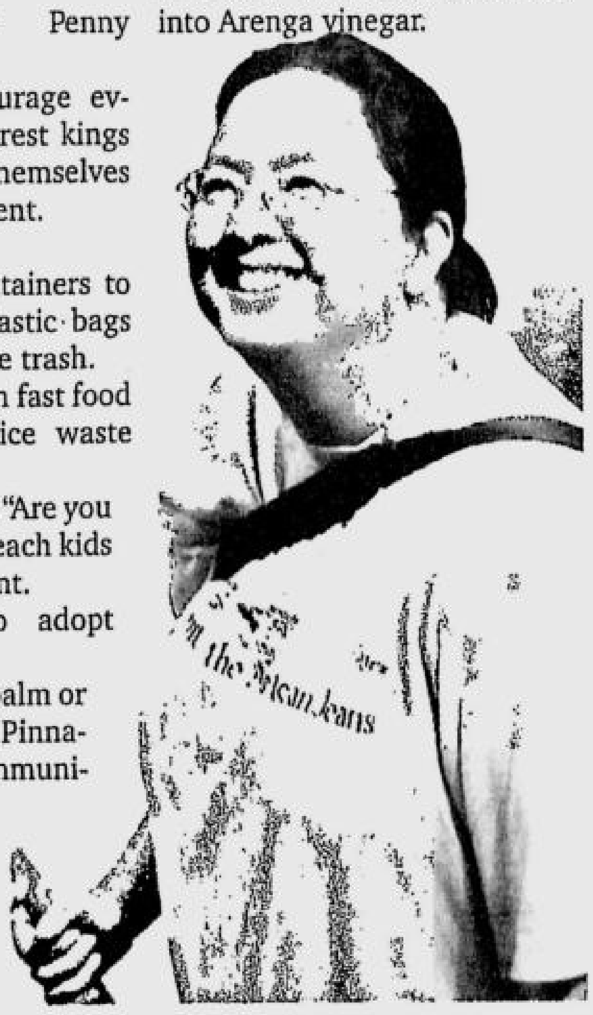
Headquarters: Happy Earth Organization

Secret Identity: Penny Reyes-Velasco

Mission: To encourage everyone to find the forest kings and queens within themselves to save the environment.

Superpowers:

- Brings own containers to avoid using more plastic bags that will end up in the trash.
- Tells managers in fast food restaurants to practice waste segregation.
- Writes books like "Are you the Forest King?" to teach kids about the environment.
- Gets people to adopt trees!
- Saves the sugar palm or kaong tree (Arenga Pinnata) by showing communities in Indang, Cavite its different uses—like turning the sap into Arenga vinegar.



The Feathered Fan

Secret Identity: Haribon Foundation

Mission: To protect nature and preserve life

Superpowers:

- Protects marine and forest life.
- Discourages fisher folks from using dynamites and loggers from cutting trees, and teaches them alternative ways of living.
- Discusses environmental issues through lectures and fora.

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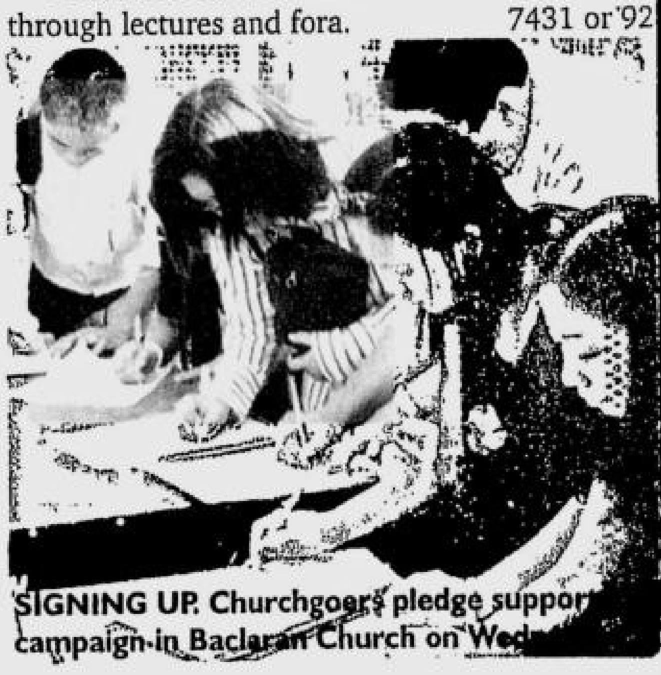

SIGNING UP. Churchgoers pledge suppor
campaign in Baclaran Church on Wed

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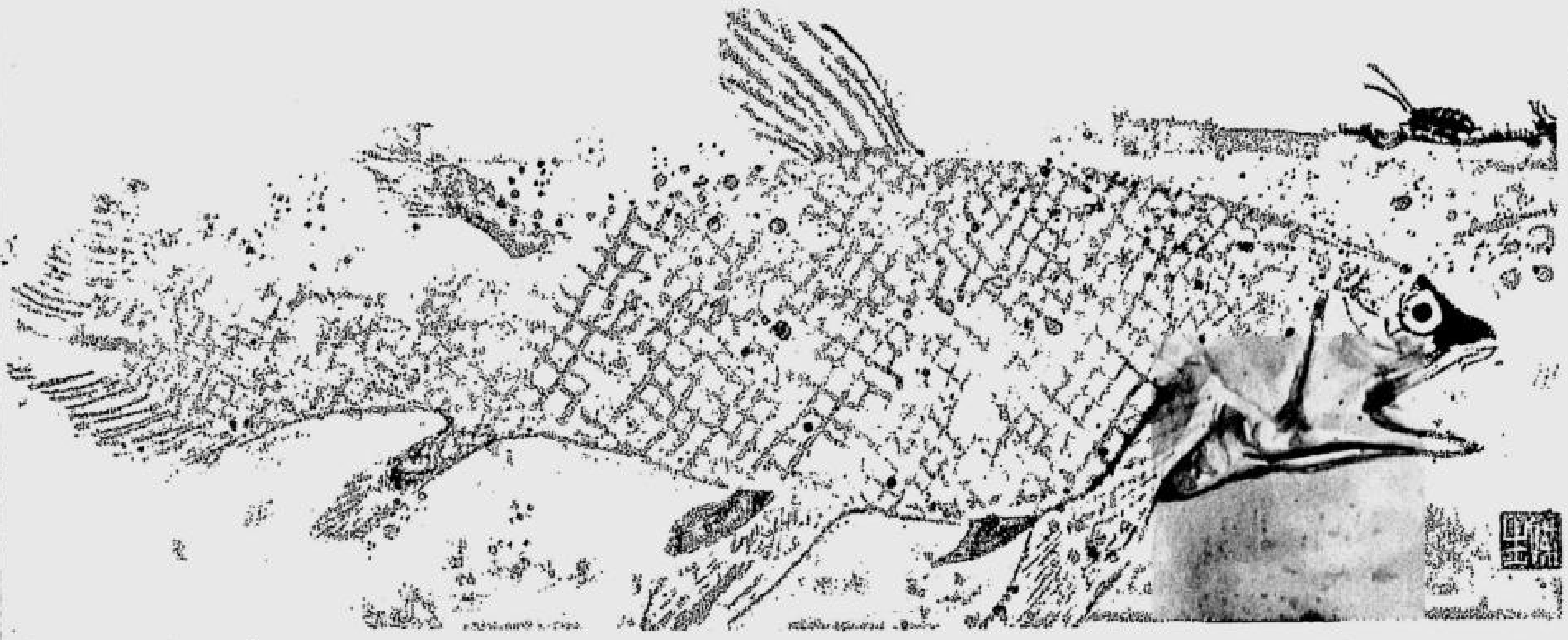

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fish and
have been

looking for more exotic fare lately. I have even resorted to scanning the surface of the ocean. Now, I have finally found something that has piqued my interest: you!"

"Wha-wha-what?" uttered a discombobulated Blatt.

"That's right. I am going to wolf you down!"

Gombess vigorously brought down his two deadly jaws onto the flabbergasted cockroach. Alas, Blatt's keen reflexes overcame the fossil fish's lethal chomp and scampered to the opposite end of his bark in a flash. The coelacanth instead scoffed up a piece of bark.

"Well, I suppose I should not have underestimated your fleetness of foot," said the infuriated Gombess. He then spat out the wood splinters he had inadvertently gobbled up.

"Please, oh, please don't eat me!" yelped the hapless cockroach as he scuttled across his piece of bark.

The coelacanth attempted another bite at the bug, but once again, the insect scooted across to the other side. However, Gombess noticed something that was to his advantage.

"Ha!" mocked the formidable fish, "You have nowhere else to run. I've eaten all of the bark except for the fragment you are standing on. Now I am assured of a delectable morsel!"

"Wait!" pleaded Blatt, "I beg of you, please don't eat me!"

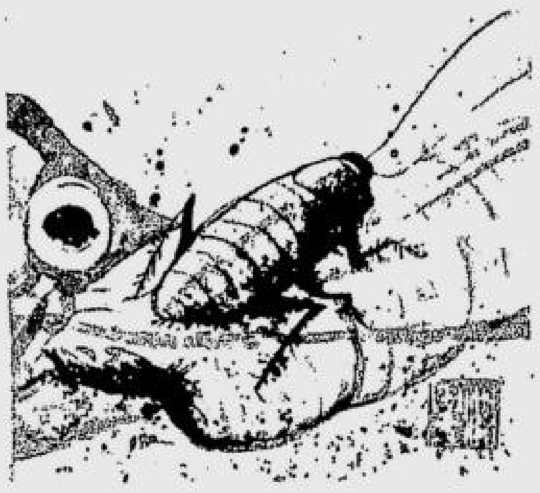
"Why shouldn't I? You are considered a pest all around the world. Convince me as to why I shouldn't eat you."

"Okay, if I convince you, do you promise not to eat me?"

The coelacanth paused for several seconds, then decided:

"I promise."

Taking a deep breath, the cockroach carefully thought about what he would say because he knew it was a matter of life or death.



"Let me tell you a true story that details a similar situation we are in right now," Blatt began. "Humans are mammals that live on land, correct?"

"Yes, that is true, although I've never tasted a human."

Blatt ignored Gombess' last comment and continued: "If I am not mistaken, humans are the most intelligent and developed species on earth. Sad to say, they are responsible for most of the extinctions of animals in the world. Right now, man is on the verge of wiping out a certain species. If this happens, a substantial amount of other animals will die out."

"That's terrible," Gombess commented, "there will be less things for me to eat."

Blatt blinked his beady eyes and plodded on:

"You see, every organism is interdependent on each other. This principle is known as the circle of life, nature's web, or the food web. For example, lions eat zebras, and in turn, zebras eat grass. If grass were to become extinct, zebras would have no more food, so they would die out. And since lions eat zebras, they would become extinct too because of lack of food. This is called a food chain."

"I've never eaten grass before," Gombess muttered.

"You're not listening," the cockroach cried.

"Yes I am, I just see things in a different light, in a buffet kind of way, that's all. Please go on," interrupted Gombess.

Blatt could hear the stomach of the Comoran menace grumbling. This only served to increase the poor cockroach's fear of being eaten.

"As an additional note, all food chains begin with plants, as they are the only living things that are producers. Animals, fungi, and unicellular organisms are usually next in line, as most of them are consumers. Finally, the chain ends with decomposers such as worms and maggots, as they break down deceased organisms. Every single living thing is in one or more food chains. Even you."

"Hmmm, a large chain of food. I would simply love to digest one of those. Of course, I would be the only one left…" Gombess remarked.

Shrugging aside the fish's side comments, Blatt resumed his tale, "The species that I was talking about is none other than the army ant. I read this in the paper just a few days ago. You see, their habitat is being destroyed by humans. Because of this, they have a high chance of dying out, and almost a hundred animals will be affected. Animals that eat these ants will die, too. In other words, their death can disrupt the entire food chain!"

"Oh no! No more food!" cried the blue coelacanth.

"Just recently, the Philippines invented a new type of pesticide that kills all male cockroaches. It was so deadly that it wiped out every single one of my male relatives. In fact, I am the only virile cockroach in the Philippines left!"

"I feel very special as I am going to eat the last male Philippine cockroach!"

"You shouldn't! If I die, there won't be any more cockroaches in the Philippines! If that happens, many animals who feed on my kind will go extinct, and the food chain will be broken! Does that convince you as to why you shouldn't eat me?"

"Well," responded the white-splotched fish, "Let me think about it for a while."

Gombess submerged and swam around at a snail's pace. "If I eat him, I will only satisfy myself, but at the expense of many other animals," he thought to himself.

Finally, he made his decision. The coelacanth rose up to the surface, faced Blatt, and spoke, "After a tedious session of deliberation, I have decided to not devour you. However, I noticed that you will be the only one to gain from this. So, in order to make this a win-win situation, you will have to do something that will benefit me."

"What will that be?" Blatt asked.

"I am still hungry."

"Don't worry," replied the insect, "I know of a place where you can find many exotic foods: in Philippine waters! If you slowly push my little piece of bark, I will show you the way. While we are there, you can drop me off. Hopefully, the pesticide will have subsided, as the pest control men would think that all of the male cockroaches have been exterminated. Is that a good deal?"

"Mmmm, more food. That's good enough for me. Hop on my back, I'll give you a lift."

With that, the pair set off for the pristine Philippine Islands. Gombess enjoyed the plentiful foods in the Philippine waters, and Blatt, after luckily finding a surviving female cockroach on land, began to propagate his kind once more. The circle of life continued.

But that's another story…

***Stefan**, 12, won the Scholastic Book Story Writing Competition (Grade 7 level) of Southridge School, Alabang for his story. He is a voracious reader and enjoys badminton and watching "The Simpsons."*

***Jason** is a member of Ang Ilustrador ng Kabataan (Ang InK).*

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h.org.ph or call 920-
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Books for Nature Lovers

IGGY IPIS BOOK REVIEWS

GOSH, I really liked the tale above. There's something about stories with cockroaches (ahem, ahem!) as the hero.

"The Lorax" by Dr. Seuss neither has coelacanths or cockroaches but it shares the same theme: save the planet!

A boy visits a creepy old house at the end of The Street of the Lifted Lorax. There the old Once-ler begins the tale:

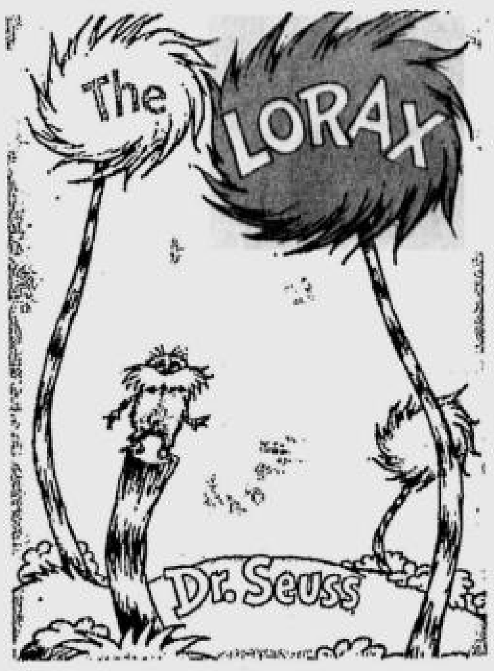
"Way back in the days when the grass was still green and the pond was still wet and the clouds were still clean…" everyone was happy.

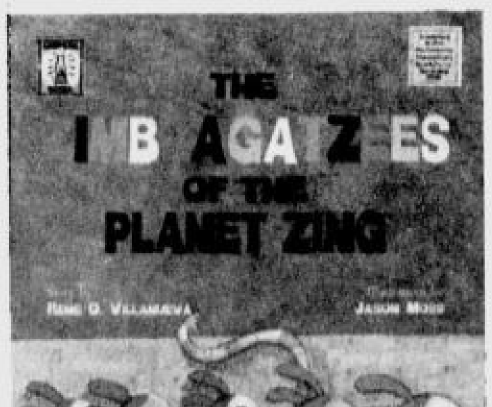
The Swomee-Swans sang, the Brown Bar-ba-loots played, the Humming-Fish swam. And everywhere you looked Truffala Trees swayed gently in the fresh morning breeze.

Alas, the Once-ler discovers a use for the Truffala Trees and chops them down to bigger his money!

The Lorax comes to plead for the Truffala Trees and all living things, but to no avail. How will this tale end?

"The Lorax" is one of my favorite read-aloud stories because of the fun rhymes and strange-sounding words that are a mark of Dr. Seuss.





THE ZIMBRAGATZEES OF THE PLANET ZING
Rene O. Villanueva
Jason Moss

Zenzational Ztory

If Dr. Seuss is one of my favorite foreign authors, Rene Villanueva is definitely one of my favorite Pinoy authors.

"The Zimbragatzees of the Planet Zing" from Lampara Books is a fun, Palanca-winning story about nature.

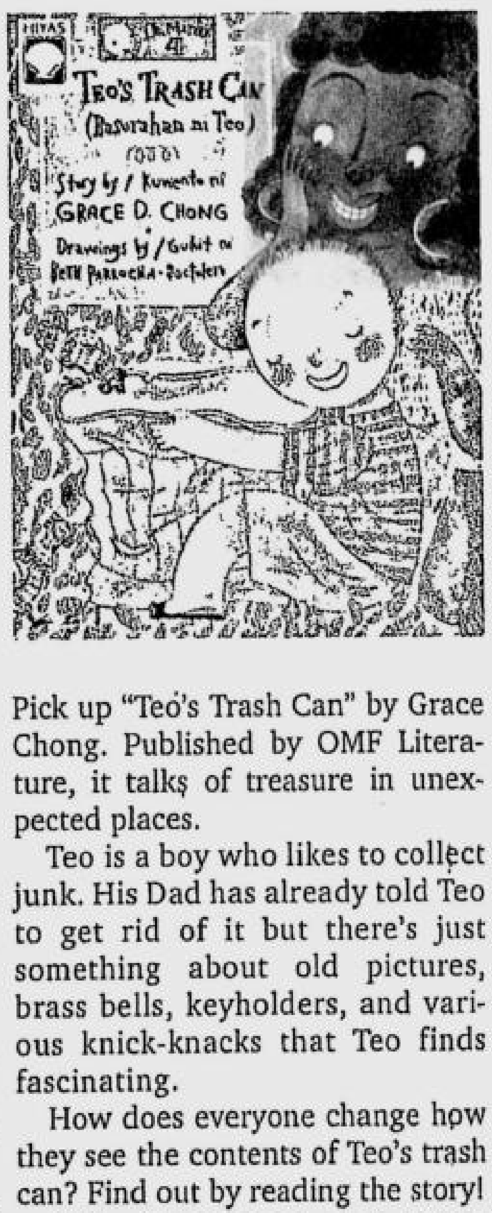
The Zimbragatzees are proud of their distinctive noses. Each nose is unique and useful, all wonderfully illustrated by Jason Moss.

But one day, all their noses disappear! They can't tell who's who. Zimbragatzee kids lose their mommies and it's all chaotic!

Can they still get their noses back or is it too late?

One more book

Want more earth-friendly books?



HIYAS
4
TEO'S TRASH CAN
(Basurahan ni Teo)
Story by / Kuwento ni GRACE D. CHONG
Drawings by / Guhit ni BETH PARROCHA-DOCTOLERO

Pick up "Teo's Trash Can" by Grace Chong. Published by OMF Literature, it talks of treasure in unexpected places.

Teo is a boy who likes to collect junk. His Dad has already told Teo to get rid of it but there's just something about old pictures, brass bells, keyholders, and various knick-knacks that Teo finds fascinating.

How does everyone change how they see the contents of Teo's trash can? Find out by reading the story!

Well, fellow book and nature lovers, I hope you enjoyed this selection. Now I'm off to try pollination. Bye!

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JOSEPH AGCAOILI

Jeffrey: Earth Angel

By Margaux Ortiz

Name: Jeffrey Losanes
Age: 12 **Grade:** 6
School: Cembo Elementary School, Makati

How he's helping Mother Nature: Jeffrey says that as president of their school's Angels Club, which stands for Agents of New Generation of Environment Lovers and Saviors, he leads his other classmates in collecting polyethylene terephthalate or PET bottles, paper, tin cans and tetra packs from classrooms for recycling.

Why he's involved: The sixth-grader says that he is concerned about the lack of dump sites in Metro Manila. He adds that they are helping ease up the problem by lessening garbage output in their school through recycling.

Mission: "I want to be Planet Earth's protector in my own little way."

Danielle: Scuba-cleaning the Sea

By Agay C. Llanera

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAUDINE BARON

Name: Danielle Anne Y. Baron
Age: 12
School: Manila Waldorf School, Quezon City

Why she's terrific: She got her Junior Open-Water certificate in diving when she was only 10 years old and has had over 50 dives since then.

How she helps the environment: Every year, she participates in the International Beach Clean-up Week wherein she picks up underwater trash in Batangas and Mindoro. She has also participated in clam seeding in a marine sanctuary. Here, every diver "plants" a giant clam in designated areas underwater. This project helps in preserving clams, which are becoming extinct.

Why it's fun to be a scuba-surero: "We get to help in lifting tires and big objects underwater, aside from a lot of trash like cans, bottles, plastic bags, and diapers! It is also fun to go diving, seeing and playing with the colorful fish and beautiful corals.

When you are a diver and see the beauty underwater, you will want to preserve it."

Why our environment needs saving: "It is important to save the environment so more people can enjoy the beautiful marine life in the future. We can help the environment by not throwing trash in the ocean and not taking or touching anything like shells, corals and fish."

Earth Patrol

Kids'r'rrific

THESE kids are doing their part to save the earth! Not all of us can be a cool scuba diver who cleans up the ocean but whether it's recycling trash into art or planting a tree, these kids make sure they do their bit to help out.

Wicci: Tree Planter

By Marlet D. Salazar

PHOTO COURTESY OF FR. MARCY H GUZMAN

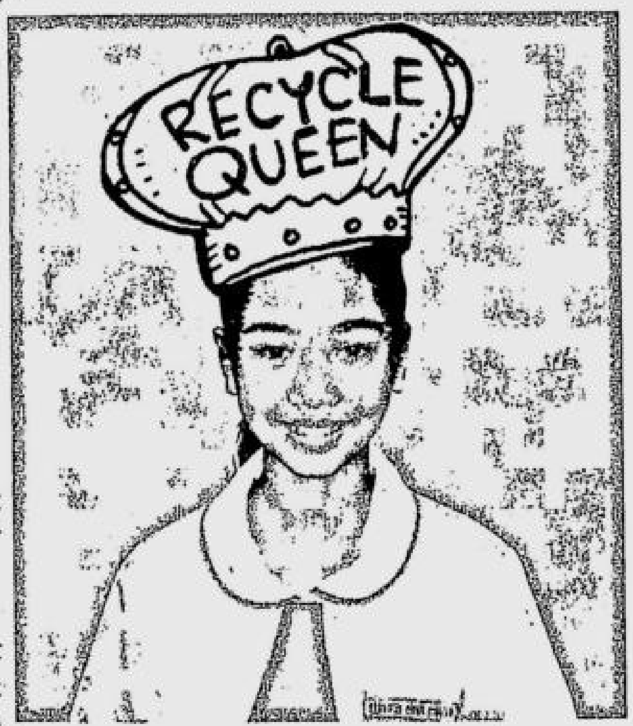
Name: Dessa Rizalina "Wicci" Ilagan
Age: 9 **Grade:** 3
School: Miriam College Grade School, Quezon City

Why she's terrific: Whenever she gets the chance, Wicci plants trees in her grandfather's farm in Davao. She does it not just for fun but also as her way of helping the environment.

Her wish: Wicci hopes that people would realize the consequences of their action or inaction before it's too late.

"What if there's no water anymore?" she asks.

Why she helps out: "Nature is life... that is why we have to preserve it. We have to anticipate the consequences of our actions and live by the rules. And the rules are: take care of the environment, appreciate it, and preserve it."



Patricia's Trash Attack!

By Astrid Tobias

Name: Patricia Pineda
Age: 11
School: Miriam College Grade School, Quezon City

Why she's terrific: Patricia is a recyclaholic. When she sees old newspapers, soda bottles and cans, she doesn't see garbage, she sees art. Using pressed leaves and colored beads, she decorates empty bottles. She turns soda cans into pencil holders and old newspapers into scrapbooks and journals.

After creating her projects, Patricia gives them away to her friends and relatives.

How she started: "I was so bored the summer after Grade 2. I stopped going to ballet classes *kasi*. My mom brought home an art book knowing that I love to do art projects. I saw that I could recycle things. So, I got the necessary things and started doing. It was not easy.

At first, it was difficult for me to finish what I started. I'm not used to doing it. I'm too lazy. *Nakakatamad na*. Then, one time I got inspired and with the help of my mom and sibling I was able to finish the project."

Be like me: "It is not expensive to recycle materials. They only need to gather used materials and be patient."

Signing up for Mother Nature

By Christine A. Paita

Name: Himerio Justin G. Garcia VII
Age: 7 **Grade:** 1
School: Claret School, Quezon City

Why he's terrific: Inspired by a lesson in school on protecting nature, Justin has gathered 22 signatures from classmates, bus mates, teachers, and the school principal for Haribon Foundation's campaign against commercial logging and mining.

How he did it: "I told them it would help stop forest destruction," Justin shares. He was very concerned when he heard about the typhoon disaster in Quezon so when Haribon sent a signature sheet to their house, Justin asked his dad if he could bring it to school. Justin is an active member of the Science Club and of Haribon Foundation, an organization actively involved in nature conservation.

His gift to Mother Nature: When not in taekwondo class, Justin waters the garden, plants seeds, and encourages his classmates to do the same. He has already grown tomatoes and eggplants, and hopes to grow more in the future.

His wish: "I want to become a farmer. I want to plant seeds so when the rain comes, there will be no more floods."

PHOTO COURTESY O
ATTY HIMERIO GARCI

Kid›'r'rrific

nomination form

I nominate:____________________

Age: ____________________

I think she's/he's 'Rrific because: (Here's a tip! Write a detailed description of a good deed, project or accomplishment by your nominee.)

She/he lives at ____________________

and studies at ____________________

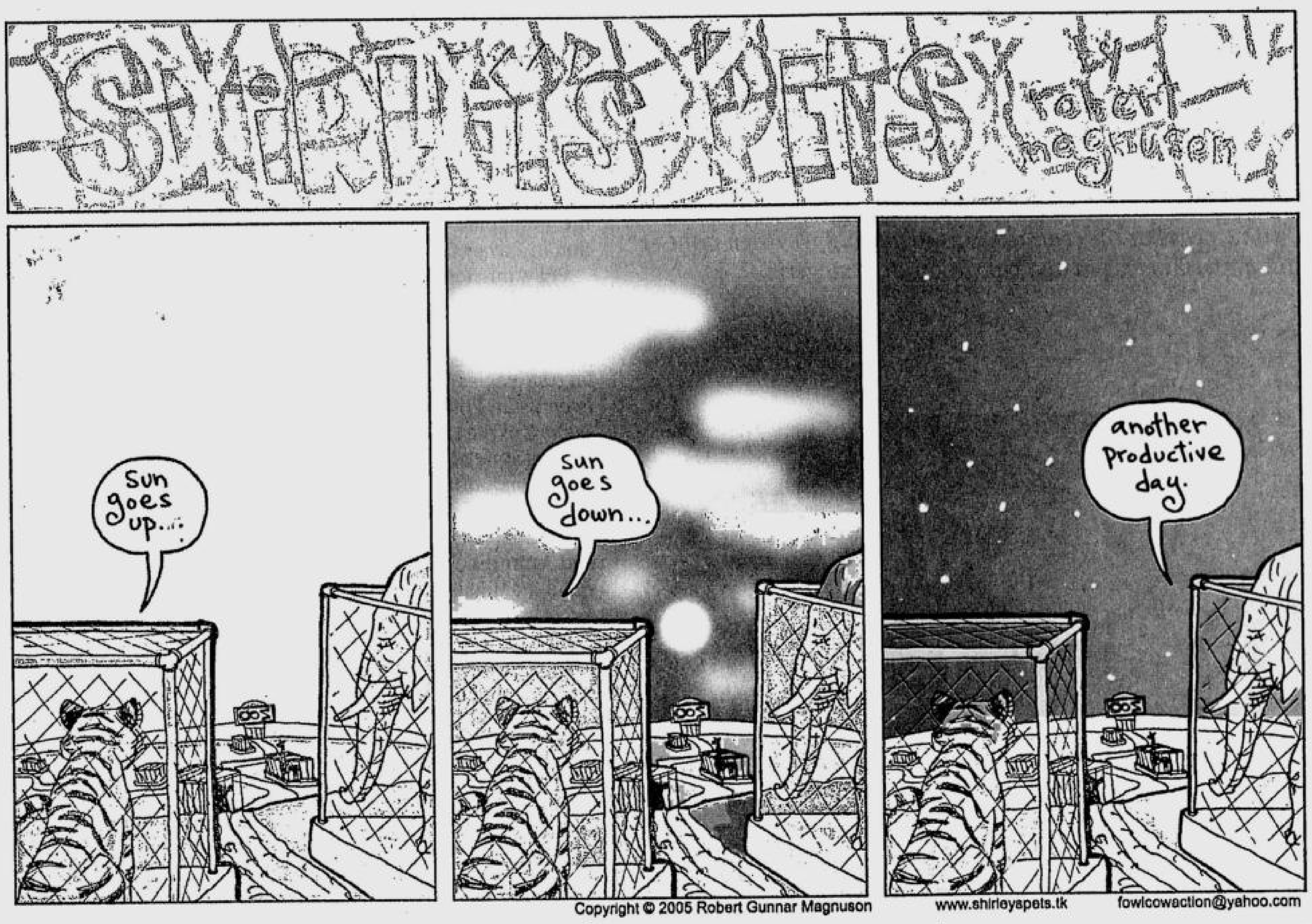
Her/his contact number is: __________

Sender's Name: ____________________

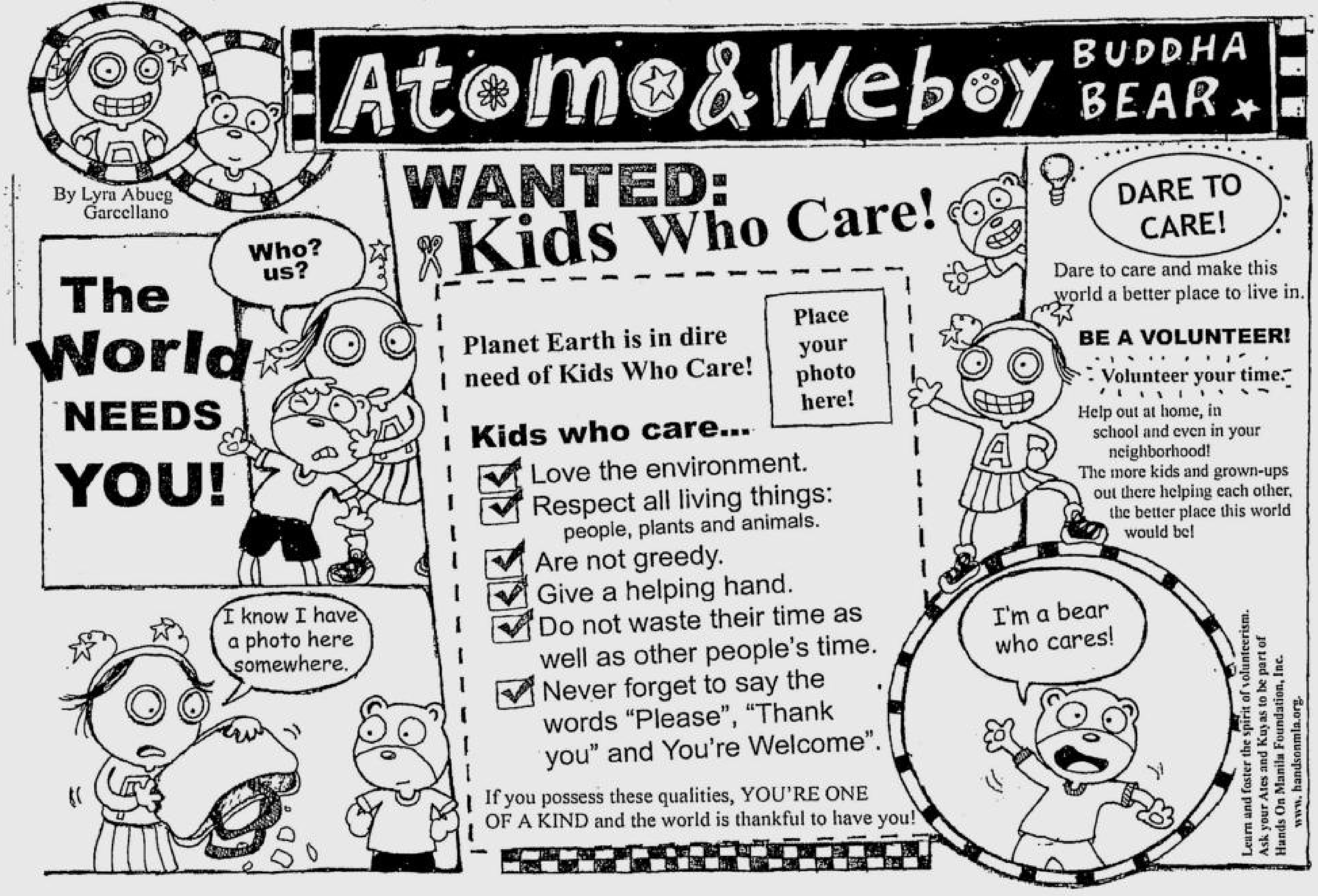
Sender's Age & School:______________

Sender's Address: __________________

Sender's Contact No. ________________


Shirley's Pets
by robert magnuson
Sun goes up....
Sun goes down...
another productive day.

Copyright © 2005 Robert Gunnar Magnuson www.shirleyapets.tk fowlcowaction@yahoo.com


Atomo & Weboy BUDDHA BEAR
Who? us?
I know I have a photo here somewhere.
I'm a bear who cares!

By Lyra Abueg Garcellano

The World NEEDS YOU!

WANTED: Kids Who Care!

Planet Earth is in dire need of Kids Who Care!

Place your photo here!

Kids who care...

- ☑ Love the environment.
- ☑ Respect all living things: people, plants and animals.
- ☑ Are not greedy.
- ☑ Give a helping hand.
- ☑ Do not waste their time as well as other people's time.
- ☑ Never forget to say the words "Please", "Thank you" and You're Welcome".

If you possess these qualities, YOU'RE ONE OF A KIND and the world is thankful to have you!

DARE TO CARE!

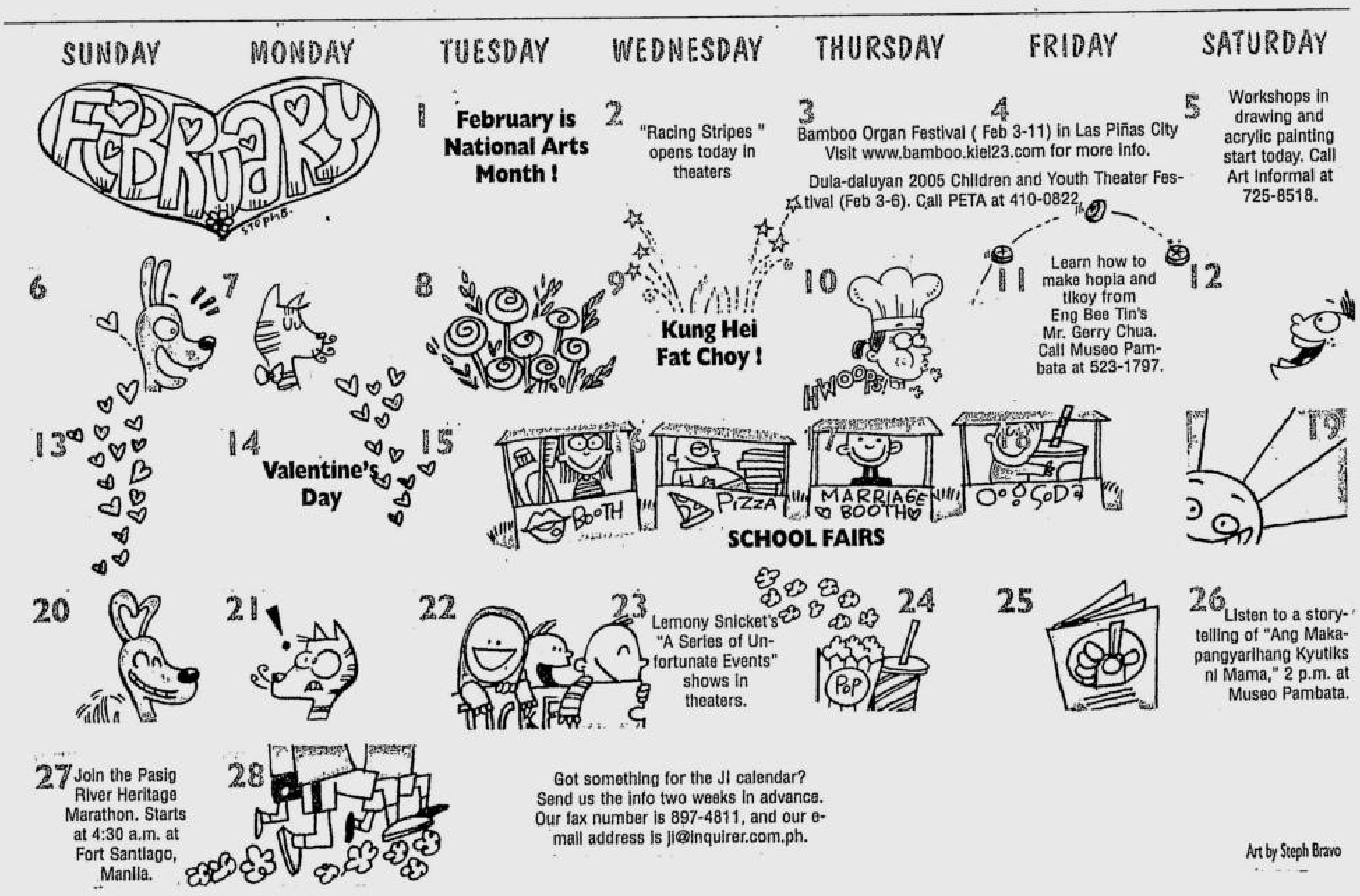
Dare to care and make this world a better place to live in.

BE A VOLUNTEER!

Volunteer your time.

Help out at home, in school and even in your neighborhood! The more kids and grown-ups out there helping each other, the better place this world would be!

Learn and foster the spirit of volunteerism. Ask your Ates and Kuyas to be part of Hands On Manila Foundation, Inc. www. handsonmla.org.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 February is National Arts Month !	2 "Racing Stripes " opens today in theaters	3 Bamboo Organ Festival (Feb 3-11) in Las Piñas City Visit www.bamboo.kiel23.com for more info. Dula-daluyan 2005 Children and Youth Theater Festival (Feb 3-6). Call PETA at 410-0822.	4	5 Workshops in drawing and acrylic painting start today. Call Art Informal at 725-8518.
6	7	8	9 Kung Hei Fat Choy !	10	11 Learn how to make hopia and tikoy from Eng Bee Tin's Mr. Gerry Chua. Call Museo Pambata at 523-1797.	12
13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16 SCHOOL FAIRS	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Lemony Snicket's "A Series of Unfortunate Events" shows in theaters.	24	25	26 Listen to a storytelling of "Ang Makapangyarihang Kyutiks ni Mama," 2 p.m. at Museo Pambata.
27 Join the Pasig River Heritage Marathon. Starts at 4:30 a.m. at Fort Santiago, Manila.	28					

Got something for the JI calendar? Send us the info two weeks in advance. Our fax number is 897-4811, and our e-mail address is ji@inquirer.com.ph.

Art by Steph Bravo

Shells and Sunset

(from page 2)

Back home, as Mama and I washed the sand off the shells, she asked me about the sunset. I couldn't tell her exactly what I felt then so I just smiled and told her it was lovely.

Up to now, even though I'm a few years older, I still don't have the words for what I witnessed. But I could assure my grandma that I've seen many other sunsets, but none of them could compare with what I saw in Nasugbu.

Going through Puberty

(from page 2)

said it was okay to swim, I trusted her. Luckily, what she said was true—the flow did stop! After swimming, all of us ate. I sat for a long time with my swimsuit and towel on, enjoying the yummy chicken. When I stood up, my friend immediately told me, *"Pupay! May tagos ka!"*

I was shocked because I was really having a good time. Too bad I had to cut my swim time short.

I showered and changed clothes. The party was to go on for about three more hours. So I patiently waited. I looked at my friends having fun, paying tag in the water. I felt envious inside although I knew that I could still do fun things like play volleyball or munch on some delicious snacks. I just said to myself, "Hey, this isn't bad at all!"

I sure learned my lesson. I had to accept my body was changing, and with it came certain consequences. Also, never swim when you have your period because you might feel bad about it (hehehe!).

Lessons from the Winged and Wild

(from page 8)

cia thinks, "It's like touching a chicken." She smiles, "I want to keep it for a pet."

After feeding time, visitors go up the stairs to Snowland, which simulates the penguins' habitat. A giant snowman sits in the middle of the snowy playground where kids ride in sleds and join in friendly snowball fights. If we have so much fun with a little snow, imagine how much more an icy region means for the penguins, who make it as their home.

For more information on The Penguin Summit, call ECOS at 813-2670.

Lessons from the Winged and Wild

ANIMALS may not speak with words but they can teach us so much if we listen up! Get to know penguins, butterflies, eagles and bats in the JI menagerie.

This One's for the Birds!

By Agay C. Llanera

SHAKE hands with these cutie waddlers. REM ZAMORA

NEXT time you go to the mall, here's another item to add to your to-do list: visit the penguins! It's no joke. The penguins are right here in Manila for a two-month visit and they're waddling and swimming right inside a mall!

No, the penguins didn't migrate to Harrison Plaza all the way from the South Pole. In fact, they hopped on a plane from a Korean zoo, thanks to some Japanese who formed the ECOS Environmental Foundation.

Confused? Don't be. This is just an example of how nations cooperate to make us aware of our environmental problems.

The Penguin Summit 2005 urges us to act on the rapid thinning of our precious ozone layer, which protects our planet from the harmful ultra-violet rays of the sun. If we don't act now, everything on this earth may eventually be burned down to a crisp, including humans. Right now, the effects of the depleting ozone layer are most felt in the South Pole, where our penguin-friends' relatives live. Imagine all that sun's unblocked harmful heat slowly melting the ice in the Antarctic region. Where will the penguins live?

If they don't have a home, then they simply won't survive.

Timi Abad of the ECOS foundation says that there used to be forty types of penguins; now there are only seventeen. Our frisky visitors are called jackass penguins and are 2-3 years old. In human terms, Tita Timi says they're as old as teen-agers. No wonder they're so energetic! They show off by diving into the pool and swimming underwater like zooming airplanes. Never have we met birds who were such expert swimmers.

Visitors are allowed to touch the penguins under the watchful eye of a Japanese caretaker. After all, these penguins are quite small, and are easily frightened. When asked how a penguin's coat felt like, 10-year-old Paula says, "It's slippery but its feathers are soft."

Meanwhile, 12-year-old Patri-

Lessons from/ p. 7

Feathered indicators of eco-weather

EAGLE in distress?! Call the Philippine Eagle Foundation in Davao City!

PEF's mission is to conserve and protect the endangered Philippine eagle (Pithecophaga jefferyi), one of the two largest eagles in the world. Even if the Philippine eagle is the star of the show, all raptors are welcome at the center.

Raptors, otherwise known as "birds of prey" include hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, and vultures. They hunt for small mammals, fish, and other birds for food.

Injured eagles that have been rehabilitated at PEF serve as animal teachers to tell children and adults not to hunt eagles and to care for the environment.

Like most big predators, the Philippine eagle requires a large territory for hunting. Philippine eagles also require the tallest trees, those which emerge above the rain forest canopy, for nesting. They have a very low reproduction rate, laying just one or two eggs each year.

That's why an eagle's presence in a given ecosystem is a sure sign of environmental health!

Sad to say, our forests are disappearing, and so is the Philippine eagle because they have no more trees to live in.

It doesn't help that humans hunt them down not knowing eating eagle meat could also be dangerous to them. Because of their position atop the food chain, eagles are particularly vulnerable to toxins, such as pesticides, which build up in their prey species.

Learn more about the Philippine Eagle and the Philippine Eagle Foundation at http://www.philippineeagle.org/. *Astrid Tobias*

ASTRID TOBIAS

Dracula vs Stellaluna

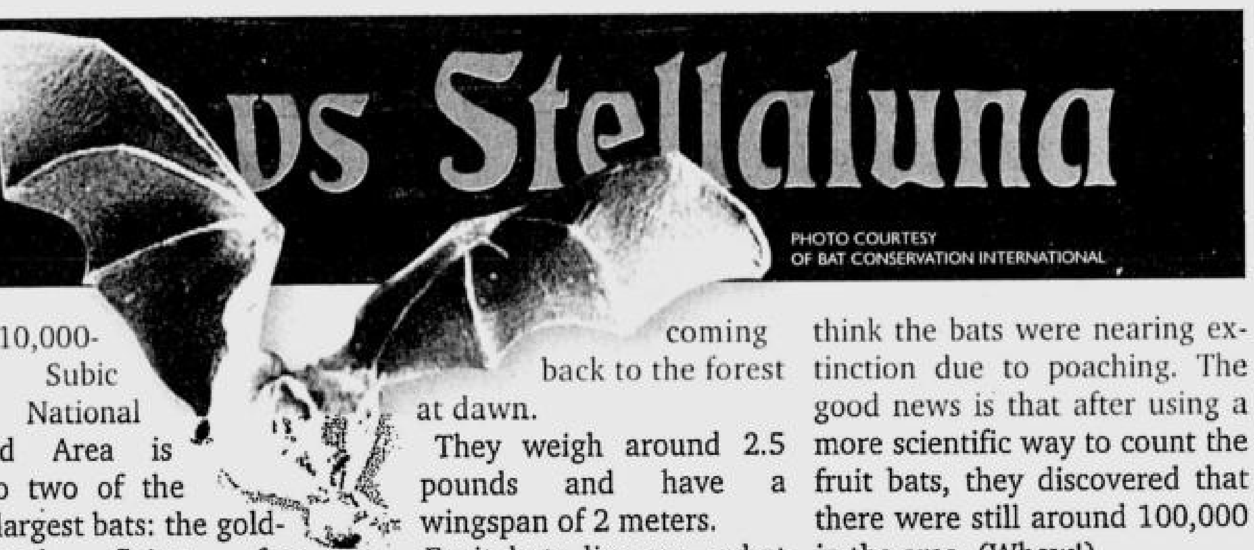


PHOTO COURTESY OF BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

By Marlet D. Salazar

BATS might seem creepy because of how they're linked to vampires and halloween, but these misunderstood creatures happen to be one of the most helpful to the environment. Try reading Stellaluna by Janell Cannon instead of Dracula.

The truth is that hundreds of plant species rely on bats to pollinate flowers and disperse fruit seeds during their flight!

Good thing we have many of them here in the Philippines.

The 10,000-hectare Subic Forest National Protected Area is home to two of the world's largest bats: the golden-crowned flying fox (Acederon jubatus) and the Philippine fruit bat (Pteropus vampyrus Lanensis), locally known as *bayakan*.

As nocturnal flying mammals, fruit bats at the Bat Kingdom in Subic take off at dusk to look for food and travel about 50 kilometers off north before coming back to the forest at dawn.

They weigh around 2.5 pounds and have a wingspan of 2 meters.

Fruit bats live on—what else?—fruits and flowers. As they search for food, the seeds contained in their waste is scattered throughout their flight path, explains Lilia Alcazar of the Protected Area Division of the Subic Ecology Center.

Tita Lilia says they used to think the bats were nearing extinction due to poaching. The good news is that after using a more scientific way to count the fruit bats, they discovered that there were still around 100,000 in the area. (Whew!)

Bat population is proportional to the size of the forest—the larger the forest the more bat inhabitants.

Fruit bats stay close together all the time, whether its during their night flight or during sleep—hanging upside down from their feet! They live in huge colonies or "camps." Their large wings also have other uses. They wrap them around their bodies when resting on trees or even use them to cool themselves.

Contrary to popular belief, bats are not blind. They have excellent night vision and a strong sense of smell which aid them in looking for food.

While they're highly skilled flyers, fruit bats can't be so proud of their landing abilities. Most of the time, they crash into bushes or trees to halt.

Fruit bats are also found in forests in Africa, Australia, Asia, and Europe.

So when you encounter a bat, don't think of Dracula. Think of Stellaluna instead. Bats are important creatures essential to the ecosystem.

PDI PHOTO

BUTTERFLY house in Concepcion, Marikina.

Little Winged Miracles

By Margaux C. Ortiz

EACH time you see a butterfly, take time to appreciate it. Unlike most living things around it, this little creature only has a limited time to do its part for Mother Earth.

"Most butterflies only live for 10 to 15 days, while others live for as long as a month," says Dinia Llado, managing officer of the World of Butterflies in Marikina City.

She explains that the common butterfly metamorphoses from a pupa to a caterpillar and finally to a marvelous winged creature in a span of 28 to 30 days.

"Their lives are really short, considering the long period of time it takes for them to transform," Tita Dinia says.

But she notes that despite its short life, the butterfly keeps itself busy by preserving the ecosystem in its own little way.

The butterfly, which tastes food through its feet, transfers pollen from one plant and flower to another.

Through this seemingly simple but very important role, butterflies help in the proliferation of plants.

Recognizing the butterfly's extraordinary service to the environment, Tita Dinia says the city of Marikina decided to put up a big butterfly farm as a sanctuary for this little winged miracles.

"Butterflies are really rare in many parts of Metro Manila because of the pollution," she explains. "They live longer in the highlands where the air is clearer."

Through the farm's facilities, they show children and adults alike the wondrous life cycle of the butterfly.

"We teach them that refusing to light bonfires and segregating garbage greatly helps in propagating these beautiful creatures," says Tita Dinia.

Aside from an exhibit of preserved butterflies, the farm features a conservatory where people could see the active flying of more than a thousand butterflies.

"It is best to visit the farm in the morning where everybody could see the graceful and active flying of these butterflies," she relates, adding that butterflies prefer to fly on a sunny day.

Since the farm's opening last year, they have been able to breed 15 species of the winged creatures.

"We have less than a thosand pupa and more than a thousand caterpillars here," she says proudly.

They make sure that everyone who visits the World of Butterflies leaves the farm with an increased affection for these winged miracles of God.

"The way it transforms from an ugly caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly is a marvel in itself," she says.